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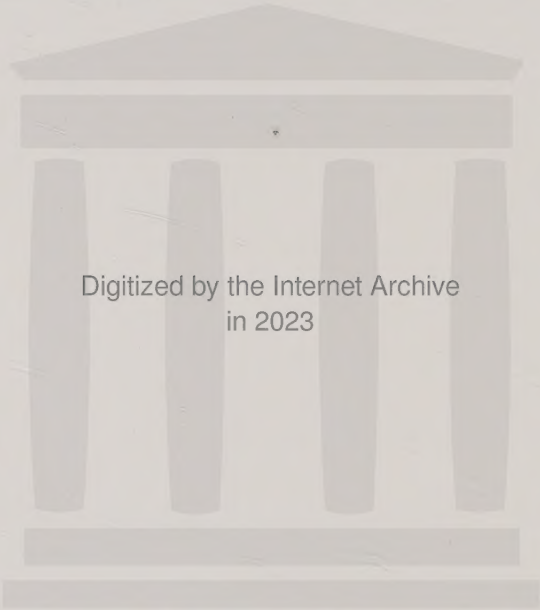

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Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834
*A series of facsimile reprints chosen and introduced by*
**Jonathan Wordsworth**
*University Lecturer in Romantic Studies at Oxford*

Radcliffe
**The female advocate** 1799

Mary Anne Radcliffe

# The female advocate

1799

Woodstock Books
*Oxford and New York*
1994

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**Woodstock Books**
Spelsbury House, Spelsbury, Oxford OX7 3JR
and
Woodstock Books
387 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016-8810

ISBN 1 85477 172 8
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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**
A catalogue record for this book is
available from the British Library

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**
Radcliffe, Mary Anne, 1745?-1810.
The female advocate/ Mary Anne Radcliffe.
p. cm. – (Revolution and romanticism, 1789-1834)
originally published: The female advocate, or, and attempt to recover the rights of women from male usurpation.
[London?]: Vernor & Hood, 1799
ISBN 1-85477-172-8: $49.50
I. Womens rights – Great Britain . I. Title. II. Series.
HQ1236.G7R33 1994
305.42'.0941–dc20 93–46509
CIP

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Smith Settle
Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 3JP

# Introduction

Thus the fair author professes: 'The subject of the following pages is an attempt to delineate the situation of those poor, helpless, females whose sufferings, from a variety of causes, are too grievous to be borne.' She produces various instances, in proof of her assertion, and discovers considerable ingenuity in the remedy which she has, with great humanity, put forward. (*Monthly mirror*, June 1799)

Mary Anne Radcliffe was difficult to place – and not merely because of confusion with her near namesake, the gothic novelist. 'All women', she had declared in the preface to *The female advocate*, 'possess not the Amazonian spirit of a Wollstonecraft'. And the approving tone of this reference was confirmed by the volume's subtitle, *An attempt to recover the rights of women from male usurpation*. Yet she seemed very modest in her pushing for female rights.

Above his brief notice on the *Female advocate*, the *Monthly's* reviewer had offered a welcome to Hannah More's comfortable *Strictures on the female system of education*:

> Society has been essentially benefited, and the morals of the people, we hope, improved, by the former productions of the author of the work before us. The *Thoughts on the manners of the great*, her *Sacred dramas* and her *Essays*, severally contribute to aid the cause of virtue and religion and to ameliorate the state of man.

'Miss More', the writer continued (expansive because unthreatened), 'deserves great praise for exposing the modern system of female education, and it would be to the permanent happiness of the female sex if the suggestions of this lady were adopted.'

Unfortunately the 'fair authors' of 1799 were not all of

them pillars of society. On the opposite page, the *Monthly*'s reviewer (seemingly the same person on each occasion) has to cope with Mary Hays, still more clearly a follower of Wollstonecraft. The very title of her new novel – *The victim of prejudice* – was enough to cause anxiety:

> The work before us exhibits much knowledge of the world. The fair author, by the bye, is rather too *warm* in many of her descriptions; and, perhaps, a masculine deportment, not very congenial to the feelings of the softer sex, is often disgustingly prevalent. Miss Hays is, however, a woman of genius, and, if read with caution, her novel may not, we trust, produce an improper effect.

The first sentence conceals its unease; the second expresses it with confusion; the third is an honest, if clumsy, attempt to give credit where credit is due.

Looking back in the *Memoirs* of 1810, Radcliffe sees herself cheerfully as 'the very shuttlecock of misfortunes':

> My dear friend, only observe what a chequered scene my whole life presents; that no sooner was I in the sunshine of expectations, but direct a storm overspread the chearful prospect: yet again *vice versa*, no sooner did a storm arise, but the effulgent beams (of hope, at least) from some cause or other, enlightened the scene; and so it hath been from my birth, to the present moment. (p. 122)

She is writing at the end of an exceedingly hard life, but nothing seems truly to get her down. Anxious to have an heir, her father, aged seventy, had married a woman forty years younger than himself. After his death, the child's guardians had sent her to a convent-school, but had not been able either to stop her eloping when she was fifteen, or to prevent her husband getting his hands on her considerable inheritance. The first of her own eight children had been born within the year. She had never ceased to love her husband, but from the first he had left

her to do everything – except spend the money, which he was good at:

> With regard to my poor dear husband, I never really did or ever can blame him.' It is true his want of resolution or exertion hath been the cause, I must say, of all the misfortunes I have experienced to the present day; nor do I need to tell *you*, my dear friend, that a very short time elapsed after our union, before, young as I was, I felt the dreadful effect of my beloved partner's easy indifference to the wants of his family ... no man could wish more to see his family comfortable and happy – but [he] could not, either by economy, method or industry, give the smallest aid. (*Memoirs*, 143)

She is far too loyal and discreet to say so, but presumably he was an alcoholic.

Radcliffe herself emerges as endlessly resourceful. At first it was a question of selling off land and possessions, then of farming out the children (two died young) and taking whatever jobs she could find. Like Wollstonecraft she had been educated to expect a secure and protected way of life, and like her (though at a later stage) she was forced to take the socially acceptable jobs of companion, governess, running a school. Often she took lodgers. Descending into trade, as Wollstonecraft never did, she became 'sole proprietor of the Ladies' Cheap Shoe Ware-House in Oxford Street'. She sold patent medicines, and for three years she ran a cake shop singlehanded, hobbling on a stick because of rheumatism.

The *Female advocate* is written because Radcliffe's sympathy goes out to the woman who has not been able to find such employments, and who has fallen that much further:

> See her trembling limbs, which are scarcely able to support her load of wretchedness, whilst she asks an alms from the casual passenger. She who, perhaps, a short time since, charmed her acquaintance with her sprightly conversation and virtuous

example, by one adverse stroke is nevertheless so soon become the contempt, the scorn, and the outcast of mortals. (p.30)

And not just an outcast:

What says the Vagrant Act? – 'Persons who beg in the streets are idle and disorderly; and any person who apprehends and carries such a beggar before a justice shall receive five shillings, when the said justice may commit them to a house of correction.' (p.35)

In general Radcliffe's intention might be to describe the situation of 'helpless females' whose sufferings were 'too grievous to be borne'. In practice, though, her concern is odder and more limited. She is campaigning for distressed gentlewomen who can get no work because 'effeminate tradesmen' have taken the jobs that they might have got. As she evokes for us women sunk to beggary, prostitution, early and miserable death, the theme becomes a little incongruous. 'What statute is there', she demands, 'which grants that men alone shall live, and women scarcely exist?' (pp. 68-69). Suddenly, it seems, in the last years of the eighteenth century, there are 'men milliners, men mantua-makers ... men stay-makers, besides all the numerous train of other professions, such as hair-dressers, &c. &c.' If men would go back to the professions where they belong, women who suffer misfortune could lead productive lives, and society itself would be more happy and more just:

'Look', says an observer, 'to the shops of perfumers, toymen, and others of a similar occupation; and, above all, look to the haberdashery magazines [stores], where from ten to twenty fellows, six feet high, may be counted in each, to the utter exclusion of poor females, who could sell a tooth pick, or a few ribbons, just as well.'

A tax upon those fellows would be very salutary, so say I! (p.21)

The tax is not seriously proposed, but Radcliffe does wish to attract 'the watchful eye of the legislature', whose

'vigilance and impartiality' she tells her readers, a little surprisingly, 'have, at all times, been a strong barrier and shield against any infringement upon the rights and privileges of the British nation'. No doubt she is flattering those whom she would like to influence, but she has an optimism shared by few radicals of the period:

I presume an investigation into the grievances of these poor suffering females will quickly be a means of doing away with the precedent of encouraging, of countenancing, effeminate tradesmen, which, it is evident [is] not only the origin of such unheard of distresses to poor helpless females, and preventing parents, who may be desirous of breaking through the fashions of the times, and placing their daughters to trades, but is; absolutely leading to the dissolution of all good government. (pp.122-3)

There is not, Radcliffe asserts, ' the smallest danger, when once the business is commenced, that the deep penetration and humanity of the guardians of the common weal will ever be baffled in so laudible a pursuit.' ' The only real plea these oppressive [male] traders can make' is that of private interest, which 'has at all times been judiciously ordered to be given up for a public good' (p.123).

There is about all this an innocence impossible to those who have moved in political circles. Despite her hard life, and her awareness of misery, Radcliffe is confident that all has been ordained for the best. Following the story of an orphan, 'abandoned by the world' after too readily accepting a male protector, she sees her as 'left to her own bitter reflections'

until the kind of hand of Providence ... admits her a member of that humane charity, the Magdalen; where in a small degree she is once more permitted to taste a portion of comfort ... and her oppressed spirits are somewhat enlivened by the following sweet and comfortable discourse from the Matron, on her admission to that most excellent charity:

'You cannot be insensible of the kindness of Providence in bringing you hither; the wretched situation you are reduced to seems to offer you no other relief. Your interest and ours is the same; we mean to do you all the good we can, and you to have good done to you; we mean to render you happy in this world, and what is of much greater moment, in the next also.' (pp.81-2)

Radcliffe's own view is similarly moral and practical. She would make the ideal matron in the charity she envisages: 'a capacious establishment for industry', aimed at 'protecting the innocent [rather than] reclaiming the guilty'. If Wollstonecraft's views of class are not entirely sound, Radcliffe's are quietly disgraceful. Though intended as a Christian charity (and as an act of Christian charity), the establishment she envisages is to 'form a discrimination between the well-bred female, who is reduced by the unseen hand of fate, and the very poor and abject, whose birth has deprived them of the knowledge of refinement or delicacy'. 'What crowds of unprovided women would', under such circumstances, 'flock to the standard' (p.83)! Why the military metaphor, it is not quite clear; but the dual inducement is to have work (commonly usurped by men), and to have it in the absence of working-class fellow sufferers. 'For the lower orders', she says in the *Memoirs*, 'I could not possibly find comfort in their society'.

The author of the *Female advocate* was a fighter for what seemed to her women's rights, but only in a very limited sense was she a feminist. In 1802 she founded *Radcliffe's new novelist's pocket magazine*, trading to some extent on Ann Radcliffe's reputation, and readers' hopes of the gothic. In 1809 she turned to gothic herself, publishing *Manfrone; or the one handed monk.* A year later the *Female advocate* was merged into the *Memoirs*. The book had not made the stir Radcliffe hoped it would. No law had been drawn up to prohibit 'effeminate tradesmen', no

philanthropist had emerged to fund an establishment for well-bred fallen females. But she kept going, and her resilience made her good at finding friends. The Bodleian copy of Radcliffe's *Memoirs* is inscribed 'To the Right Honbl the Countess of Dalkeith from the Author'. Her books at least were keeping excellent company. Lady Dalkeith – 'lovely chieftainess' of Walter Scott – had prompted the writing of the *Lay of the last minstrel.*

J.W.

# Frontispiece.

Corbould delin.

Bacon sculp.

THE

# FEMALE ADVOCATE;

OR

## AN ATTEMPT TO RECOVER

THE

## *RIGHTS OF WOMEN*

FROM

## MALE USURPATION.

By MARY ANNE RADCLIFFE.

The fairest of created works was made
To share, with man, th' empire of creation,
T' enjoy its comforts and its sweets, its pains
And suff'rings.——— ANON.

London:

PRINTED FOR VERNOR AND HOOD,

NO. 31, POULTRY.

1799.

# TO THE

# READER.

SO various and complicated are the ſcenes of this life, that ſeven years have elapſed ſince the following pages were written, a period, perhaps, more favourable for publiſhing than the preſent; but timidity, or other hinderances have repeatedly prevented their appearing before the public; during which time the author hoped ſome more able advocate would have taken up the

cauſe, to do juſtice to a ſubject of ſuch importance to ſociety at large, and particularly a much injured part thereof. For, alas! it is too well known, that female education, in general, is confined within very narrow limits, and ſeldom permitted to extend to claſſical accompliſhments. The writer of this volume being a female, with only a female's education, is ſufficiently aware of her inadequacy to the undertaking, but truſts the importance of the ſubject will claim ſome attention; at the ſame time, repoſing a full confidence in the candour and unbounded goodneſs of ſome part of her readers at leaſt, ſhe is once more encouraged to reſume the pen, to add, or amend ſuch remarks as the nature of the times and circumſtances require, and, at length, has ſo far ſurmounted her timidity, as to ſubmit the following ſheets, with all their imperfections,

perfections, to the inſpection of a generous public, who are more ready to appreciate the works of individuals from the rectitude of intention, than the beauty of compoſition. The attempt, ſhe muſt acknowledge, has coſt her many a painful emotion; for a firſt attempt, ſurrounded by all the diſadvantages peculiar to the ſex, ſeems, to her, to require no ſmall ſhare of courage, and which, indeed, nothing but the importance of the ſubject ſhould have induced her to encounter.

The ſubject of the following pages is an attempt to delineate the ſituation of thoſe poor, helpleſs, females whoſe ſufferings, from a variety of cauſes, are too grievous to be borne; the ſources and dire conſequences of which the exalted in life cannot form the leaſt conception, unleſs they condeſcend to examine for themſelves, when, it is to be hoped, their griev-

ances will be ſought into and redreſſed. The munificence of the people of Great Britain, which is ever ready and adequate to the ſupport, aid, and comfort, of the afflicted, when their troubles are fully inveſtigated; and the great number of unfortunate women, who, doubtleſs, would rejoice to become virtuous and uſeful members of ſociety, in ſome lawful employment, have encouraged the author to offer this feeble repreſentation. Nor can ſhe deſpair of eventual ſucceſs to the cauſe ſhe has engaged in, if ſhe is but ſo happy as to excite the attention of thoſe whoſe ſouls are enlarged with the exalted ideas of Chriſtian charity.

Indeed, it is a work which, as a duty to our fellow creatures, ſhe has long, very long, wiſhed to ſee executed by a more able pen; but the ſilence of others, the liberality of a generous public, and a moſt ardent wiſh to ſee miſery alleviated,

ated, and virtuous induſtry crowned with abundant ſucceſs, have been the principal motives to her engaging in ſo arduous an undertaking. Conſcious, however, that whatever good may be the reſult, the praiſe alone is due to the benevolent principles of humanity.

The author, at the ſame time, wiſhes it to be underſtood, that ſhe has not been ſtimulated, from vain and ambitious views, to appear in print, but rather from the pure philanthropic motive of throwing in her humble mite towards the much-wiſhed-for relief of theſe moſt pitiable objects of diſtreſs; numbers of whom, from the want of a fair repreſentation of their caſe, ſhe greatly fears, are unable to obtain ſhelter under the auſpicious ſhade of Chriſtian charity; and, conſequently, are compelled to ſhare the fate of the moſt wretched of human beings. She

wiſhes to repreſent the caſe of thoſe who would be induſtrious, if they might, but are held down by the moſt powerful influence of cuſtom and miſrepreſentation; and, conſequently, are incapable, without the kind aſſiſtance of humanity, to find redreſs, or even again to tread the paths of virtue. But, alas! finding herſelf ſo feeble an advocate, ſhe can only hold the pen of Truth, whilſt Reaſon and Juſtice plead their cauſe.

*Kennington Croſs,*
*March 6th,* 1799.

INTRO-

# INTRODUCTION.

"Say, firſt of God above, or man below,
"What can we reaſon from, but what we know?"
POPE.

LET not the fair fame of this country be tarniſhed with an unnoticed appeal; in particular, an appeal of ſuch magnitude as to involve, at once, the peace, the happineſs, and the welfare of every individual. The author's deſign is by no means to contend for power, but protection for this oppreſſed people; imagining that to be the firmeſt baſis on which to eſtabliſh the happineſs of both ſexes.

It muſt be allowed, however, when cuſtom has given permanency to any practice, however evil in its tendency, it is next to impoſſible to effect its removal, or to ſucceed in any reaſonable claim; therefore I contend not with

with the lords of the creation, for any other privilege than that protection, which they themſelves avow to be the *real rights of women.* I would not have it underſtood, that the generality of women, any more than men, are incapable of acquiring the ſame degree of knowledge and improvement in literature; and happy am I to learn, that this ſtate of prohibition is not general; and that a claſſical education, in ſome parts, is not confined to men alone; for, if the author is not miſinformed, it is upwards of ſeven years ſince there was an eſtabliſhment formed in Philadelphia, where youth and innocence find protection from the guardian genius, Inſtruction, whoſe emblematical trophy may very well be formed of Knowledge gaining the victory over Ignorance.

But theſe advantages, in Britain, being monopolized by the male ſex, permit me to aſk, if it is not their duty, at leaſt, to afford protection in their ſtead; for, ſurely, if they refuſe to protect, they have no right whatever to govern.

" Britons, attend! be worth like this approv'd,
" And ſhew you have the virtue to be mov'd."

Therefore I am led to keep firmly to the aſſertion, that it is not power, but protection; which is required; for the generality of women, *natives of this country*, are ſo perfectly tamed, either through cuſtom or compulſive ſubmiſſion, that, let but the lenient hand of protection be ſtretched out to their aid, and, doubtleſs, content and happineſs will reſume their ſeat, and cheerfulneſs form the leading feature, to beſpeak the tranquillity of thoſe ſouls, which have been ſo long depreſſed.

All women poſſeſs not the Amazonian ſpirit of a Wolſtonecraft. But, indeed, unremitted oppreſſion is ſometimes a ſufficient apology for their throwing off the gentle garb of a female, and aſſuming ſome more maſculine appearance; yet, when the curtain of miſrepreſentation is once withdrawn, it is to be hoped, (not doubted) that the cauſe of complaint will quickly be removed.

It ſeems, however, very neceſſary to call in ſome able aſſiſtants, and conſequently I make

make my appeal to reaſon, juſtice, and truth, which, in checking the ſpirit of malevolence, ſhould it rear its hydra head to the prejudice of the cauſe, will alſo be the means of ſhielding the writer from the common cenſure which the narrow-minded, in general, beſtow on a firſt production.

A ſerious ſtatement of facts, it is to be hoped, will be productive of good to great numbers, who would be happy to relieve their fellow-creatures, but whoſe exalted ſituations in life too generally preclude them the opportunity of obtaining a knowledge of the real wants of the wretched, or the cauſes of their ſufferings; by exhibiting, though feebly, a complicated picture of miſery and diſtreſs.

Yet, it may not be amiſs to obſerve, that having made my remarks chiefly on real, and not imaginary grievances, ſhould any thing in theſe pages do violence to the critical abilities of any of my readers, whoſe ſuperior education exalts them above the level of the inferior ranks of ſociety, it is the writer's requeſt, that the intention may be kept in remembrance.

Still,

Still, methinks, I hear the voice of reaſon reproaching me, after the many acknowledged diſadvantages, for attempting to write on a ſubject of ſuch weighty importance. Indeed, conſidering the great number of eminent writers that are daily diſplaying their erudition in a variety of ſubjects, and in ſtyles ſo very far ſuperior to my poor abilities, the undertaking were preſumption itſelf. But, amidſt the abundant ſhew of publications which are daily uſhered into the world, I have not ſeen one on a ſubject ſimilar to this. This alone is the exciting cauſe to my undertaking, in which it will be my utmoſt ambition to be the humble means of directing the tender eye of benevolence to worthy objects of commiſeration; or, inducing ſome more able advocate to take up the cauſe of a much-injured and oppreſſed part of the community.

Doubtleſs, in their journey through life, a number of my fellow travellers have made the ſame obſervations with myſelf, though they have not made them public; yet, willing to ſuppoſe *that* ſilence did not proceed from a want

want of thoſe philanthropic diſpoſitions which have, at all times, diſtinguiſhed Britons, we will ſuppoſe this great omiſſion, for undoubtedly great it will appear, when properly inveſtigated, cannot poſſibly have been occaſioned from any other cauſe than the force of cuſtom, by which the greateſt part of the community have been ſo long hoodwinked; and thoſe grievances paſſed by in ſilence, of which I am about to ſpeak. Many excellent charities this country ſupports, and many worthy individuals ſeem to exult in ſtepping forward to the aid of the diſtreſſed; nor is it to be doubted, that many more would as cheerfully contribute in ſupport of the ſtill unfortunate and oppreſſed, were they made acquainted with the real objects: but, alas! when keen adverſity ſtrikes its pointed dart into the boſom of the afflicted, the pain is too great to admit of an explanation; and when paſt, their only endeavour is to bury its remembrance in oblivion: therefore, unleſs ſome friendly hand take up the pen, how can thoſe, who are enabled by fortune and prompted by compaſſion, ſtretch forth the hand of clemency to diſtreſſes, of which they

they never heard; or, like the good Samaritan, pour oil into wounds which they never ſaw. In the mean time, then, let mine be the painful, though voluntary, taſk; and even ſhould the deſign not immediately meet with the deſired ſucceſs, no doubt, but in a ſhort time it may, by the kindly interference of the great, powerful, and humane inveſtigators of human calamities, to the emancipation of this oppreſſed part of the human kind.

At the commencement of the Magdalen charity, it is true, an objection was ſtarted, which was founded upon this candid queſtion: "What will you do with ſuch poor creatures, when you have them?" But the difficulty was as ſoon ſolved by Robert Dingley, Eſq. the firſt humane propoſer of the charity. Nor is there a doubt, were a ſimilar enquiry to take place, it would as ſoon be ſolved; for what undertaking is too bold for man to attempt, when a reſtoration of happineſs to his fellow creatures is the object. I ſhall, then, cheerfully proceed to offer the following general hints, which, it is hoped, will be improved upon to the good of ſociety.

THE

# THE FEMALE ADVOCATE.

## PART FIRST.

### THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF MEN TRADERS ENGROSSING WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONS.

TO detail human miſery in all its various ſhapes is not in the power of any individual: ſo complicated and numerous are the ills of this life, and ſo various its misfortunes, that we need not have recourſe to the airy regions of fiction or romance, to find out objects of diſtreſs, to pourtray the woes of our fellow creatures; yet, from motives of delicacy,

beg leave to withhold names, leſt the ſuffering objects ſhould feel hurt at the melancholy recital of their tale of woe; and ſhall therefore only ſelect a few inſtances, and leave the candid moraliſt to take a comparative view of the reſt, through all the wonderful mazes and wide tracts, to which a part of our fellow mortals have been condemned.—And by what? not by divine law, which is, or ought to be, the ſtanding rule of all our actions, but by an evil precedent, which happens to fall with all its force upon that part of the community, whoſe feeble powers of reſiſtance, joined to an habitual paſſive ſubmiſſion, are the leaſt able to defend them. Conſequently it has never yet been thought a buſineſs worth inveſtigation, although ſo many others, of much leſs moment, have been ſought out, and redreſſed.

When we look around us, nothing is more conſpicuous in the eyes of the world, than the diſtreſſes of women. I do not ſay thoſe whom a kind Providence hath placed under the immediate care of a tender father, or an affectionate and kind huſband; or, *by chance*, a friend,

a friend, or brother. But theſe, alas! compriſe only one part of the community. Notwithſtanding all are of the ſame nature, and were formed by the ſame Divine Power, yet their comforts differ very widely indeed. Still, as women ſeem formed by nature to ſeek protection from man, why, in the name of juſtice, refuſe the boon? Does it not become highly worthy the attention of men in general, to conſider in what manner to redreſs the grievances *already within their notice?*

Perhaps it may be ſaid, and very juſtly, that, conſidering human frailty, there is amongſt women, as well as men, a vaſt number of vicious and undeſerving. Granted; ſtill, is it not better to paſs over a hundred guilty, than let puniſhment fall upon one innocent perſon?—Beſides, IS THERE NOT A POSSIBILITY OF FORMING A PLAN OF DISCRIMINATION, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE ONLY WHO MERIT SUCH HUMANE AND FRIENDLY INTERFERENCE?

Some years ago, who would have been made believe, ſo many perſons could be reſtored to life, as the Royal Humane Society,

for the recovering of drowned perſons, has effected? Yet ſo it is; which proves to a demonſtration, the practicability of this deſign. But before I proceed with my Hint for erecting any eſtabliſhed plan, for the reſtoration of peace and happineſs to the, perhaps, once happy, but now moſt miſerable of beings, I cannot help making a remark, that, in order to lay a good foundation, every builder muſt find it neceſſary, firſt, to remove the rubbiſh out of his way—So let us proceed to the ground-work of the deſign; and, before any further ſteps are taken, aſk, What can be ſaid in favour of men-milliners, men-mantua-makers, and men ſtay-makers? beſides all the numerous train of other profeſſions, ſuch as hair-dreſſers, &c. &c.; all of which occupations are much more calculated for women than men. But, thanks to the faſhions of the times, for once, which have nearly exploded that diſgraceful cuſtom of men dreſſing ladies' hair, by the introduction of all the brutuſes and chignons, of every denomination, which have found their way to the toilets of all deſcriptions of females.——

Where

Where is there a Stevens now? was there ever a wider field for the diſplay of his talents? Yet, if perukes are the faſhion of the day, what is to prevent a woman from diſplaying her taſte upon a lady's head as well as a man, who ſeems much better calculated for a more maſculine employment.

"Look," ſays an obſerver, "to the ſhops of perfumers, toymen, and others of a ſimilar occupation; and, above all, look to the haberdaſhery magazines, where from ten to twenty fellows, ſix feet high, may be counted in each, to the utter excluſion of poor females, who could ſell a tooth-pick, or a few ribbons, juſt as well."

A tax upon theſe fellows would be very ſalutary, ſo ſay I; yet, for a poor female individual to attack ſo numerous a body of men, however inſignificant by cuſtom, is a bold ſtroke, no doubt; yet, having thrown theſe ſentiments together, in defence of the oppreſſed, even the cenſure of malevolence itſelf *will* not prevent the truth, which, like a huntſman's whip, cannot give pain to any *but* thoſe it touches: for, as no rule can be eſtabliſhed

without exceptions, ſo in this caſe more than one muſt be granted, which ſhall be treated of in a ſubſequent part of theſe pages. To claſs the innocent with the guilty would be doing injuſtice to the cauſe.

But, in the mean time, where are theſe fathers, huſbands, brothers, and profeſſed friends to virtue and happineſs, who ſtep not forward in the buſineſs? No doubt but there are many men of great probity and humanity, and yet, through the progreſſive courſe of cuſtom, have not adverted *either* to the cauſe or its fatal conſequences; or, in fine, are not aware of the real diſtreſſes of our fellow-creatures; from which idea it is ſo frequently wiſhed a reference to facts may take place, ſince neither the ſufferings of theſe poor women, nor the cauſe of their ſufferings can poſſibly be known, but by inveſtigation.

It is not to be ſuppoſed but all, in ſome degree, ſhare the common misfortunes in life; and few there are, however wretched their ſituations, who cannot ſingle out other beings as bad, if not in a more deplorable ſtate.

But

But, in the caſe of theſe poor women, where is there a ſtate nearly equal to theirs? borne down by fate's afflicting hand, they are not able to act, or ſeek redreſs; and this, by the unfeeling part of the world, we have too great reaſon to fear, is termed idleneſs and profligacy.

What a littleneſs of mind! what an unfeeling and deſpicable meanneſs muſt lurk in the breaſts of thoſe, who can, with impunity, inſult over diſtreſs! Into what fits of deſperation have numbers of helpleſs females fallen through theſe contemptible inſults and revilings, and even neglects! for, it is in thoſe dark moments of diſtreſs, when the ſenſes are all alive to the fine feelings of nature, that every nerve is relaxed and ready to receive the fatal dart.

Then indeed it is, that ſhe ſtands expoſed in the field of adverſity, ſurrounded by every diſadvantage, without the aid of education, or the guardian hand of protection; that is to ſay, without either weapon or ſhield of defence: a ſituation which, it is natural to ſuppoſe, would draw pity from the moſt obdurate hearts. Yet,

how many are the inſtances of the cenſorious part of the creation, daſtardly and cruelly aſſaſſinating and murdering the character of theſe poor unfortunate victims, and thoſe of all murderers are the worſt under heaven. The common and detected murderer ſtands expoſed to the laws of his country, but the aſſaſſin, who, under a cloak of hypocriſy, can perſecute and defame the characters of oppreſſed females, are no longer worthy the invaluable title of Chriſtian.

Then, paſs no longer, ſo unconcernedly and without notice, the diſtreſſed and wretched ſituation of the moſt helpleſs part of the creation, who are not impowered by any means whatever to defend themſelves; having, by the ſtrong power of cuſtom, ſo long been deemed unworthy of notice.

O! may that auſpicious day arrive, when the curtain may be withdrawn, and the tragic ſcene expoſed to open view; when every true Briton who reveres his Maker, or his king, may cheerfully exert himſelf in the general cauſe.

What

What greater ſatisfaction can the good heart feel, than to be the inſtrument of drawing diſtreſs from the dark ſhades of obſcurity and wretchedneſs? In addition to which, are we not fully convinced, from the words of our bleſſed Teacher, that a kind and charitable diſpoſition towards our fellow-creatures, is one of the greateſt precepts of our religion? Does he not ſay, by this the world ſhall know you to be my diſciples, if you love one another. Then, on the ſtrength of divine exhortation, let us comfort theſe poor women in the words of the immortal Milton:

"Be not diſheartened then, nor cloud thoſe looks,
"That wont to be more cheerful and ſerene."

But with joyful expectation wait a relief to thoſe trying hardſhips which the unfortunate part of poor females have ſo long ſuſtained; not doubting but ſome friendly and humane well-wiſher to the diſtreſſed, *and the public in general*, will zealouſly undertake the cauſe, whether individually, or in general, matters not; for it is not to be ſuppoſed, all men are in the ſame mind at once, or can obtain a full know-

ledge

ledge of the caſe at firſt view; but when once begun, doubtleſs others will as quickly join in the grand cauſe, and from a ſerious ſurvey, diſcover ſome mode of regulating this complex buſineſs, which carries ſuch a vaſt train of grievances after it, and which is deeply interwoven with the happineſs of the greateſt part of the people, connected with the whole, will manifeſt itſelf to every ſerious enquirer, and ſhall be more fully enlarged upon, as we explore the dreary ſcene. But I can never force myſelf to a belief, that woman, the mother of all mankind, was ever intended by Divine Providence to become a butt, or mark, to receive ſo many piercing darts from the ſons of her boſom, as her only reward for all that maternal affection and kindneſs which the helpleſs ſtate of infancy and childhood render ſo neceſſary: independently, does it not ſeem a ſocial intereſt in nature, to give aid and ſuccour to one another?

No: it was never intended that women ſhould be left deſtitute in the world, without the common neceſſaries of life, which they ſo

ſo frequently experience, even without any lawful or reputable means of acquiring them, through the vile practice of men filling ſuch ſituations as ſeem calculated, not only to give bread to poor females, but thereby to enable them to tread the paths of virtûe, and render them uſeful members, in ſome lawful employment, as well as ornaments to their profeſſions and ſex. This lovely appearance, alas! is but too often thrown aſide, and, frequently, *not* from vicious inclinations, but the abſolute neceſſity of bartering their virtue for bread.

Then, is it not highly worthy the attention of men, men who profeſs moral virtue and the ſtricteſt ſenſe of *honour*, to conſider in what mode to redreſs theſe grievances! for women were ultimately deſigned for ſomething better, though they have ſo long fared otherways.

That there ſhould be a mixture of characters in the world is, beyond a doubt, for wiſe and good reaſons, which we poor ſhort-ſighted mortals know not, more than that it is a principle in which all reflecting perſons have agreed, that

that our preſent ſtate, on this ſide the grave, is certainly deſigned for improvement, in order to fit us for a better. This being admitted, where can the well-diſpoſed find a better opportunity, than by defending the innocent and unprotected, ſelecting them from the noxious part of mankind, with whom they are, through keen adverſity, obliged to aſſociate; and placing them in ſuch ſituations, as will enable them, to purſue the paths of virtue, by means of ſome honeſt employment?

But to accompliſh ſo laudable a deſign reſts both with the humane and the opulent, by whoſe inveſtigation, there is not a doubt, but it will be found a work of the utmoſt importance, not only in the preſent ſtate of things, but in looking forward to a ſucceſſion. For in times like the preſent, is not the aid and aſſiſtance of men required in the military and naval departments? And in more peaceable times, which we have to look forward to, are not, or ought not, the manufactories of the country to be the firſt object conſidered? In either of theſe caſes, it evidently appears,

appears, that men may be much better employed than in filling women's occupations. For, in the words of St. Luke, theſe poor females may very juſtly ſay, "to dig I cannot, to beg I am aſhamed." From this evil precedent, there is no other alternative for theſe poor women, but beggary or vice!

Let us then, if you pleaſe, ſelect one of theſe diſtreſſed females, out of the prodigious multitude, and purſue her through the humiliating ſcene of beggary: I believe it is granted, that pride is well known to be the predominant paſſion of the human breaſt, and conſequently any comments on that head are needleſs; but certain it muſt be, that after, perhaps, a life of eaſe and affluence, to be compelled to ſuch a mortifying ſituation, requires more than a common ſhare of fortitude to ſupport. Still this prevailing paſſion, with all its train of attendants, muſt be ſubdued, in the dreadful ſituation of beggary which cannot fail to bring down the ſpirits of theſe unhappy victims, with more oppreſſive force than it is in the power of words to expreſs, or pen to paint, and can only

only be conceived, *in part*, by the ſilent ſenſations of thoſe who can adopt another's woes, and trace the paſſions of the human mind. For what muſt not be the perturbation of a mind like this, when dire neceſſity compels the poor, neglected victim to purſue ſuch degrading ſteps, in order to ſupport a miſerable exiſtence! See her trembling limbs, which are ſcarcely able to ſupport her load of wretchedneſs, whilſt ſhe aſks an alms from the caſual paſſenger. She who, perhaps, a ſhort time ſince, charmed her acquaintance with her ſprightly converſation and virtuous example, by one adverſe ſtroke, is nevertheleſs ſo ſoon become the contempt, the ſcorn, and the outcaſt of mortals! Nor is this wretched doom confined to youth alone; but, by the cruel hand of fate, the poor, dejected mother, as well as daughter, is condemned to ſhare the ſame direful misfortunes, and be reduced to the ſame low ſtate of wretchedneſs, from which their characters are ſtigmatized with infamy, and to which they unavoidably fall a ſacrifice. In this miſerable ſtate they

they muſt for ever remain, until the ſpirit of oppreſſion and miſtaken prejudice is eradicated, and the heavy cloud of miſrepreſentation cleared away, through a proper inveſtigation of the cauſe, which, doubtleſs, will lead to a conviction; that the diſtreſs and wretchedneſs of theſe poor, abandoned creatures originate chiefly from the avaricious and mercenary views of that ſet of beings, who are "Eating the bread of the hungry, and drinking the drink of the thirſty." Nor are theſe poor women allowed "to pick up the crumbs," which will appear in the ſequel.

In the mean time, let us, if you pleaſe, take another view of this poor mother and her miſerable daughter, in this forlorn and diſtreſſing ſtate of beggary, and there ſee what relief they obtain, from their piercing accents and broken ſighs—little more, it is to be feared, than contempt or inſults. Even the hand of charity, accuſtomed to beſtow on the needy, no ſooner obſerves the appearance of youth, or a capability of induſtry, than it is inſtantly withdrawn,

withdrawn, and kept in reſerve (as it is thought) for ſome more proper object.

Good heavens, what a ſcene of woe! when the poor mother and her helpleſs daughter are turned adrift, to the mercy of an unfeeling world; which neither their genteel education, or delicate conſtitutions, broken down by poverty and hardſhips, can prevent. O! what diſtreſs, in a ſituation like this! The mother, the fond mother, in the full bitterneſs of maternal affection, takes another, and another view of her darling child; perhaps the only remaining pledge of a late kind partner! ſees her ſtill laden with the fruits of a pious education at leaſt; views her with unutterable fondneſs, "whilſt all the ſoft paſſions of her tender ſoul throb through her breaſt with unavailing grief," at the near approach of their deſtruction! In vain do they ſupplicate their former friends, for the voice of cenſure has pointed them out as infamous! Good God! what grief can equal this? Abandoned by friends, and left to the reproach, contempt, and cenſure of a cruel world, without

without a proviſion, or any probable means of gaining a ſubſiſtence, or even the ſmalleſt glimpſe of diſtant hope.

And, though ſhocking to relate, yet ſuch is the miſerable ſituation of thouſands of defenceleſs women.

Nor let the unfeeling and cenſorious part of mankind refute the aſſertion, until proviſion is made for the relief of all thoſe who would be both induſtrious and virtuous, had they the means. After which, the remaining few may juſtly be reckoned in the claſs of incorrigible ſinners, and be a ſufficient mode of forming a diſcrimination.

But until that proviſion is made, it is inhuman, baſe, and cruel, and beneath the dignity of a Chriſtian, to load with infamy the poor, neglected female, who ſuffers through misfortunes, and the continuation of an evil precedent; and whoſe paſſive virtue is, perhaps, at the very inſtant of calumny, offering up the divine petition of, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" and endeavouring to arm with Chriſtian fortitude herſelf and beloved child, according to the

advice of the wiſe man, who ſays, "Haſt thou children, inſtruct them from their youth." She remonſtrates with the child of her boſom, notwithſtanding ſhe is her partner in wretchedneſs, and ſtill encourages her to perſevere in virtue, and live in joyful hope.

"Let us, my dear child," ſays ſhe, "form our eſtimation of the world and its objects as they deſerve; remembering we are pilgrims and ſtrangers here. Let us keep in view the glorious prize; and let us ſoar above the crowd of human difficulties, and rejoice that the hand which made us is divine. Then, let not our feet tread in the muddy paths of vice, nor ſuffer the purity of our good intentions to be ſtained with a ſingle act of diſobedience to a Supreme Power."

And under theſe and ſuch like reviving comforts, the effects of a religious and pious education, ſhe ſtill endeavours to perſevere in virtue, though in the midſt of poverty; a ſtate which, without the interference of the humane, not any thing can hide them from but the ſilent grave. Oh! let not then our ears be polluted by the envenomed breath of cenſure,

ſure, but endeavour to remove the cauſe, as well as ſtigma, which, like the pendulum to a clock, ſets every wheel of wretchedneſs in motion; and by ſeriouſly inveſtigating the cauſe, ſearching deeply into the ſtate of facts, and the origin of this tribulation, let the cenſure reſt where it is due. For, is it not enough, enough indeed! for the innocent to ſtruggle with the hardſhips of penury and want, without the double load of malevolence? Alas! even in this deſpicable ſtate, they are ſtill liable to ſorrows they never yet felt, nor are even aware of; for the very means they are driven to uſe, to obtain the trifling pittance which they ſue for, renders them expoſed to the mercileſs hand of any avaricious ruffian, who may be baſe enough to drag theſe poor victims they know not where.

What ſays the Vagrant Act?—"Perſons who beg in the ſtreets are idle and diſorderly; and any perſon who apprehends and carries ſuch a beggar before a juſtice, ſhall receive five ſhillings, when the ſaid juſtice may commit them to a houſe of correction."

However ſhocking the ſentence, what numbers of theſe poor objects have been dragged away by the ruthleſs hand of the unfeeling ſavage, to ſome loathſome priſon, without regard to the more refined or delicate ſenſations of one or another? Good heavens! there ſurely needs no Siddonian powers to heighten ſuch a tragic ſcene. She who, perhaps, was reared with all the gentle ſoftneſs and maternal care of a fond parent; ſhe, who ſo lately was looked upon as an ornament to her ſex, until the preſſure of misfortunes compelled her to ſeek for bread, to be at once confined in a dark priſon, there to be obliged to hear all the opprobrious language of the very loweſt ſet of beings, and that under a ſtorm of oaths and imprecations, which, of itſelf, muſt pierce her very ſoul. There to have her ears grated with the rattling of bolts and bars, and all the adamantine fetters of miſery. Good God! is it poſſible we can ſee our fellow creatures debaſed ſo low! Can we ſee the tender and delicate frame, which was formerly accuſtomed to eaſe and tranquillity, and which

was

was formed by nature to participate in others misfortunes! can we let theſe innocent and helpleſs beings paſs unnoticed, and not commiſerate their diſtreſs, and aſk, from whence the cauſe?—No! it is impoſſible the eyes can any longer be ſhut to their ſufferings, or the ears to their piercing cries of, "Have pity on me! Oh! ye, my friends, have pity on me!"

Is not this real diſtreſs? Surely there cannot be any thing more wretchedly miſerable than the ſituation of theſe poor women, who are prohibited from ſharing in induſtry, or the common neceſſaries of life, or even taſting the very dregs of comfort. For let us but figure to ourſelves this wretched pair upon their bed of ſtraw, with all their innocence, with all their tenderneſs, and quick ſenſations of diſtreſs, ſtill laden with the fruits of a pious education,

"They ſhriek, ſtart up, the ſame ſad proſpect find,
"And wake to all the ills they left behind."

And thus they linger out a wretched exile in this miſerable dungeon, until the law hath had its courſe, and they again are liberated.

When ſee, the fond mother, the poor mother, taking another, and another review of her wretched offſpring, groaning out a miſerable exiſtence on the narrow verge of life! her ſorrow ſurrounds her like the ſtern winter's blaſt, and ſhe feels her worn-out ſenſes juſt bordering upon deſponding madneſs; for, when Hope no longer offers her conſolation, deſpondency muſt take place; and with all the bitter pangs of diſtreſs, ſhe, like the poor widow in ſacred writ, ſets about to prepare her laſt handful of meal, that "they may eat it and die." A releaſe they moſt ardently wiſh for, whilſt in a ſtate of innocence, rather than keep life upon ſuch wretched terms as are now preſented: for, alas! by this time, they ſee that period near at hand, which muſt determine the great and ſhocking alternative between vice or death. And what muſt be the conflict at this long-dreaded moment, to a heart which, in early youth, was taught to ſerve its great Creator, and ſtill retains an ardent wiſh to be virtuous! Can any ſtate under heaven be more diſtreſſing to a delicate and ſuſceptible mind, than that between good and evil?

evil? And, how ſhocking it muſt be, at length, to hear theſe poor victims of wretchedneſs, defend themſelves, by exclaiming, "I ſought not redreſs in vice, till urged to it by ſelf-defence, in order to ſupport an exiſtence, which, though I no longer covet, it is my duty to preſerve: nor is there any other remedy for ills like mine; for, as the wiſe Solomon ſays, "extreme oppreſſion maketh us deſperate!"

What a horrid and ſhocking ſtate! to be driven, by abſolute neceſſity, to ſupport a wretched exiſtence by the forfeiture of every thing ſhe holds moſt dear in this life, and at the hazard of what is ſtill more precious, her immortal ſoul!

Beſides, what muſt not be the agonies of her ſoul in this wretched ſtate, on the dreadful approach of death? a death which, though ſo much deſired in innocence, is dreaded with ſo great horror in guilt, when all her crimes appear at once to her diſtracted view. Worn out with intemperance and diſeaſe, ſhe feels the dreadful period near at hand, when ſhe muſt appear before the grand tribunal!

How many are her penetential tears in ſuch a horrid ſituation? She calls, and calls again, upon her great Creator, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy fury, nor chaſtiſe me in thy wrath; for who can ſtand before the face of thy indignation?" And thus ſurrounded with all theſe diſmal and heart-piercing ſenſations, without a friend to comfort, or the ſtill more invaluable conſolations of a dying Chriſtian; her every ſenſe is racked with horror, and little unlike the infernal regions is her wretched ſituation.

Whilſt her aſſociates in vice are revelling in drunkenneſs, in order to baniſh from their reflections all ideas of the horrid ſcene, and thus ſhe lies, "Groaning out the poor remains of life," her limbs bathed in ſweat, and ſtruggling with convulſive throws, pains inſupportable throbbing in every pulſe, and innumerable darts of agony tranſfixing her conſcience.

"In that dread moment, how the frantic ſoul
"Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
"Runs to each avenue and ſhrieks for help,
"But ſhrieks in vain. How wiſhfully ſhe looks

"On

" On all ſhe's leaving, now no longer her's.
" A little longer, yet a little longer."

Thus her exhauſted breath expires, and ſhe dies in all the bitterneſs of woe. And this alike muſt continue to be the fate (as it has been ſo long to numbers) of both parents and children, unleſs the kind hand of interference ſhall ſever the chain of miſery, by which they have ſo long been held down.

But will not a ſerious inveſtigation into theſe ſcenes of horror be ſufficient to arouſe the moſt callous of mankind? for who would not uſe their utmoſt endeavours to relieve ſuch unheard-of diſtreſs? Or, what is ſtill better, prevent ſuch dire calamities, and all ſuch complicated ſcenes of miſery and wretchedneſs: for, is it not always granted, that prevention is better than cure?

Then let it not be ſaid, that a country ſo famed for its juſtice and humanity, ſhould ſuffer a continuance of ſuch diſtreſs; or that any of our fellow creatures ſhould be compelled to take ſhelter under the baneful ſhades of vice, in order to ſupport a miſerable exiſtence.

Much,

Much, *very much*, indeed, may be ſaid on this ſubject, but it is not my wiſh or intention to delineate, or dwell longer upon the tragical hiſtory, than may ſerve to lead to the avenue of inveſtigation; when a ſmall part of theſe ſtriking truths, to a reflecting mind, will be ſufficient to conciliate, and cauſe them to exert a cheerful readineſs to ſerve our fellow-creatures; by doing which we are well aſſured it is performing a three-fold duty, viz. to God, to our neighbour, and ourſelves. I am fully perſuaded, it will appear equally as political as humane; for the poor, miſerable, and oppreſſed creatures cannot ſay with *Job*, "I have erred, mine error remains with myſelf." No: their crimes are contagious, and their errors extend and ſpread their baneful influence through cities, towns, and whole countries, to the utter deſtruction of families of all deſcriptions; in which caſe, is it poſſible unwary youth ſhould eſcape?

What numbers of unguarded young men, even with hearts inclined to virtue, have unhappily been drawn on to vice, by the powerful inſinuations of theſe poor abandoned females,

males, who, like Eve in Paradiſe, is no ſooner fallen herſelf, than, by deceitful artifice, ſhe ſpreads the net of deſtruction to catch others. For example: need we go any farther than the theatres, the reſort of all, both good and bad, and where abandoned females, of all ages and degrees of profligacy, attend to make their harveſt, and gather in their unlawful plunder, to ſupply the ordinary wants of the enſuing day? And what can better anſwer the purpoſe of decoy than the drama? for, ſhould it be comedy, the obſcenity which prevails in many of our modern plays, cannot fail to act as poiſon upon the young mind: or is it tragedy, what can have a greater influence upon the feelings of ſenſibility, or ſooner awaken the tender paſſions, which theſe miſerable women take ſpecial care to tranſlate to their own evil purpoſes? Perhaps, in drawing a ſimile of their own diſtreſs, or by ſome other artful repreſentation or pretence, by which ſuch numbers of innocent and inexperienced young men are artfully led aſtray, in their moſt unguarded moments, whilſt ſeeking a rational and innocent amuſement, as a relaxation

ation from the toils of the day, from which, too many have found themſelves, at once, immerged in deſtruction, and ingulphed in the quickſands of vice.

Horrid deſtruction! if all, or the greateſt part, of this originates from women being precluded from ſupporting themſelves by means of ſome lawful employment, who will continue to countenance a precedent, big with ſo much deſtruction?

How many unhappy young men have fallen a ſacrifice, both in mind and body, to the diabolical artifices which theſe poor, miſerable, abandoned women are driven to practice for bread! And how many Barnwells, who, not able to ſupport, by honeſt induſtry, the wants of a favourite miſtreſs, have forcibly purſued ſuch methods as have brought them to miſery, ſhame, and death, and their diſtracted parents with ſorrow to their graves! leaving behind them the remainder of an unprovided family, to toil up the ſteep of difficulty; and, *if females*, with all the tribulations before them which we have been juſt tracing in others!

Nor

Nor does the dreadful calamity end here; for, notwithſtanding ſo many unfortunate females have been obliged to ſeek bread in the paths of vice, and ſo many young men have fallen victims to their folly and wickedneſs, ſtill the ſame devouring jaws of deſtruction are open for its future prey; nor can they ever poſſibly cloſe, until the grievous precedent of men uſurping females' occupations is entirely done away, *or ſome proper ſubſtitute provided*, ſo as to enable women to ſhare the common neceſſaries along with their fellow-creatures: till then, we need not wonder at the vaſt number of pickpockets and houſebreakers which, at all times, infeſt the ſtreets, to the diſturbance of all civil ſociety; for we may again repeat with Milton, when night

"Darkens the ſtreets, then wander forth the ſons
"Of Belial, flush'd with inſolence and wine.

For when "young men, void of underſtanding," are ſeduced by ſuch lawleſs and licentious methods to ſquander away, in riot and drunkenneſs, what they have obtained by unlawful plunder, it is no difficult taſk to find

out

out the cauſe of theſe nocturnal depredations; for we may naturally ſuppoſe, theſe poor unhappy women are always ready to benumb and drown their reflections with intoxicating liquors, the effects of which muſt lead them, with their wretched aſſociates, into every exceſs of ſin and wickedneſs, to the utter demolition of public happineſs and ſafety, as well as incurring a heavy burden of expences upon the inhabitants.

It is ſaid, the city of London alone pays upwards of twenty thouſand pounds annually to patrols, beadles, and watchmen; and it may be a much greater ſum; yet, that of itſelf ſeems a vaſt ſum indeed, to be raiſed by levy, in which the honeſt trader muſt unavoidably contribute a large ſhare. Would not that contribution anſwer a much better purpoſe in providing for the neceſſitous poor, ſuch as we have juſt been treating of, and who are judged unfit objects to be received into a pariſh workhouſe; being, *as it is termed*, able enough to earn their own bread out of the houſe?

Yet, ſo long as there continues a prohibition againſt women having an employment, it

is

is to be feared, double the ſum already raiſed by the inhabitants will be found inefficacious. But ſuch is the link of progreſſion, ariſing from this dreadful uſurpation; which ſhews the neceſſity of entering into the origin of theſe melancholy truths, that ſo the chain of connection may be found whole; otherways, far be it from me to entertain a wiſh to offer to the generous part of my readers a work fraught with ſo many tragic repreſentations: but, leaſt the want of a full narrative ſhould leave the ſubject dark to comprehend, I ſtill purſue my plan; and even ſhould my zeal in the cauſe of happineſs lead into an eccentric mode of writing, be it remembered it is an eccentric cauſe, but with a moſt ſanguine wiſh to ſee all the inhabitants of this favoured iſle become uſeful and happy members of ſociety, inſtead of being the harpies of deſtruction.

That political and private happineſs are invariably connected, is beyond a doubt; and that the morals of this nation are very corrupt, is but too viſible, from the vaſt numbers of diſgraceful women who infeſt the face of the country. As for the number of theſe miſerable

ſerable beings, it cannot be an eaſy matter to aſcertain: but ſuppoſe, from the prodigious numbers, that are ſeen ſcattered about, like ſheep having no ſhepherd, that in London, for example, there are five or ſix thouſand: Nay; I have either read, or heard it ſaid, ten thouſand! but how that calculation can be made, I ſhall not take upon me to ſay; yet, ſuppoſe we call it half that number; are not five thouſand deſtitute females too many to ſuffer through ſo poor a cauſe, and will not a much leſs number ſuffice to contaminate the morals of more than half the youths in town, and prove a ſource of deſtructive oppreſſion to a vaſt number of inhabitants? for, without morals, how can we expect happineſs, or what is to ſupport the public good?

Then, what ſort of beings are they, who can, with impunity, oppreſs theſe unfortunate women, to the entire deſtruction of all happineſs, both national and domeſtic? Or where is the breaſt, truly warm in the cauſe of virtue and a country's good, who will ſuffer the continuance of a precedent ſo deſtructively oppreſſive, without exerting themſelves in the cauſe?

cauſe? for granting it is a great part of the Chriſtian religion, to aſſiſt our neighbours as far as we are empowered. To neglect an inveſtigation of theſe grievances admits no excuſe, when once the clouds of obſcurity are diſperſed; for enquiry is the great ſource of knowledge.

From the holy ſcriptures we learn, that "Wiſdom is juſtified in all her children;" and from what but wiſdom and juſtice is derived the ſupport of our common weal, by inveſtigating which, will not the judicious quickly diſcover a numerous train of oppreſſive grievances not yet told. Let him but enquire the cauſe of ſuch vaſt numbers of convicts having been ſent abroad, to the great expence of the nation; and ſee if their connection with theſe neceſſitous women has not been a great means of their misfortunes: for, alas! young men, upon their firſt entrance into the world, are too often inebriated with the pleaſing, but baneful, draught of pleaſures, till their ſenſes are ſo much intoxicated, that they run they know not where, and at length find themſelves enſnared in

the net, which theſe poor abandoned women, or rather the inſtigators of their miſery, have ſo artfully ſet to entrap the unwary.

Yet, a ſerious conſideration, no doubt, will prompt an enquiry, and a perſeverance in the purſuit; and ſurely we may hope, an undertaking, founded on ſuch a baſis as the laws of humanity, and a general good, can never fail of ſucceſs. Nor will the more generous part of men-traders, ſuch as are before deſcribed, delay to reſign a privilege, maintained upon ſuch unjuſt principles; for far, very far, be it from me to ſuppoſe, or entertain a wiſh to inſinuate a ſuppoſition, that all effeminate tradeſmen are equally guilty of a known violation. Nor is any individual accuſed for involuntary crimes: yet, does it not behove every member of ſociety to inform themſelves, eſpecially when the object of enquiry is of ſuch great magnitude, as to extend beyond the intereſt of individuals, and affect a whole community?

It is beyond a doubt, that many men, through the force of cuſtom, are ignorant of the injury they are doing their neighbour, and

and mankind in general, the details of which I have very ſcrupulouſly collected, and may ſay with Shakeſpeare, I have "nothing extenuated, nor ſet down aught in malice."

Indeed, I have not a wiſh to accuſe, or call in queſtion, the conduct or motive of any individual. No: ſuffice it that I appeal to their own feelings, to humanity, and the goſpel truths; after which, let the inward monitor of the guilty ſay,

"Thou art the man."

But permit me to infer, this ſelf accuſation only extends to one part of the oppreſſive body; yet, what is to be ſaid for the remainder, who ſhall ſtill perſevere in perſecuting theſe poor helpleſs women, to the ſubverſion of all civil ſociety? for, are we not told by the inſpired writer, "It is not the will of our Father, which is in heaven, that one of theſe little ones ſhould periſh." Then, in compliance with our threefold obligation, are we not ſtrictly enjoined to exhort our brethren to turn from their evil ways. What ſays St. Matthew, "If thy brother ſhall treſ-

paſs againſt thee, go and tell him his faults: but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes, every word may be eſtabliſhed; and if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

But by what means, leſs than enquiry, are we to know who our offending brother is? or why, in this enlightened age, is a buſineſs of ſo much conſequence neglected! a buſineſs on which nothing leſs than the ruin or proſperity of a ſtate depends; independent of Chriſtianity or humanity, the great characteriſtic of the nation. Then, in a caſe where the whole is ſo ſtrongly connected, why delay a ſingle moment in the reſearch. Indeed, it is a well-known maxim, and muſt be allowed, that thoſe who are not forward in a cauſe, may be juſtly ſaid to be againſt it; or, in other words, whoever is not the encourager of virtue, muſt unadvoidably be the encourager of vice. But let the breaſt of ſympathy participate in the ſufferings of their fellow creatures. Let the tender eye

of

of pity, which can ſo ſoon diſſolve at an imaginary tragedy, a mere mock repreſentation in a theatre, be truly melted into pity at real calamity.

That great numbers would be happy in contributing to the aid and relief of thoſe who appear to be objects of diſtreſs, is beyond a doubt: but, alas! for helpleſs, injured females! the heavy clouds of prejudice and miſrepreſentation have thrown ſo dark a veil between them and the pity of the world, that they are deſpiſed by all. Yet, when the curtain is once withdrawn, and the tragic ſcene expoſed to open view, leading theſe poor creatures from obſcurity into open light, then will be the criſis, when every good Chriſtian may be impowered to ſoften the affliction of another's woes; and though it may not be in the power of every ſympathiſing breaſt to contribute towards their temporal wants, they may ſtill be impowered to ſooth their ſorrows, rather than drive the envenomed arrows of cenſure ſtill deeper into their afflicted boſoms.

What kind of monument did the immortal Hervey make choice of for himſelf? "Let

me," ſays he, "leave a memorial in the breaſts of my fellow-creatures. Let ſurviving friends bear witneſs, that I have not lived to myſelf alone, nor been altogether unſerviceable in my generation. O! let an uninterrupted ſeries of beneficent offices be the inſcription, and the beſt intereſts of my acquaintance the plate that exhibits it. Let the poor, as they paſs by my grave, point at the little ſpot, and thankfully acknowledge, there lies the man, whoſe unwearied kindneſs was the conſtant relief of my various diſtreſſes; who tenderly viſited my languiſhing bed, and readily ſupplied my indigent circumſtances. How often were his councils a guide to my perplexed thoughts, and a cordial to my dejected ſpirits."

And why may not the ſame inſcriptive monument belong to many? It is in the power of any one to merit it, even by the good offices and tender concern for theſe poor objects, who, like a foot-ball, are ſtill rolling upon the ſurface, ready to receive the next ſtroke, without being able to make the ſmalleſt reſiſtance. Nor is there any other ſet of beings under the heavens, who ſtand in greater need of conſolation

lation, than theſe poor unfortunate women: or who, through vile cenſure, receive leſs; conſequently, the more deſperate and diſtreſſing the caſe, the ſympathy and condolence the more welcome; and will always, in ſome degree, ſoften and alleviate afflictions.

Indeed, it is not any, but the luke-warm, or miſinformed, who requires to be reminded of ſuch diſtreſs; for, where is the breaſt, truly warm in the cauſe of happineſs, that is not hurt at the very ſight of ſo many ſhocking ſpectacles in the ſtreets. Even under the appearance of guilt, it is horrid to ſee human nature debaſed ſo low: but how much greater the ſenſations of pity, when it appears, the greateſt part of the diſtreſs we ſee, is not through a vicious or depraved diſpoſition, but abſolute compulſion; through the encouragement given to a deſtructive cuſtom, which permits men to enjoy a privilege, which nature never aſſigned them; and they are thereby encouraging vice to predominate, and holding virtue in fetters.

Conſequently, whether this evil be perſiſted in through ignorance, from its being an an-

cient cuſtom, or whether from the intereſted, narrow views of a malignant paſſion for gain; or from whatever cauſe, ſeeing it robs ſuch a number of helpleſs women of employment and bread, it is a privilege, which, in juſtice to every tie of honour or conſcience, ought to be relinquiſhed, unleſs—I repeat it—a ſubſtitute is found.—Can it be termed either manly, honourable, or humane, to oppreſs induſtry and helpleſs innocence, and place them under the abſolute neceſſity of ſacrificing their virtue, their happineſs, and every thing they hold dear, at the ſhrine of the avaricious, *and* (for the ſake of diſtinction) *effeminate tradeſmen*; and flying to the rendezvous of ſin and wickedneſs, to ſupport a miſerable exiſtence; and after, perhaps, having fallen a ſacrifice to diſeaſe or compunction of mind, are poſſibly ſo fortunate as to gain the privilege of an aſylum*; a charity, which will ever redound honour to its illuſtrious patrons and benefactors, and will be a laſting monument of Britiſh munificence: and, it is hoped, and fervently wiſhed, the noble example, and the

* The Magdalen.

many

many proofs of its utility, may extend its influence over the remaining part of the benevolent, who are bleſſed with affluence, and that we may ſhortly ſee a ſimilar inſtitution take place, as an aſylum of prevention, until a more effectual relief can be procured or given; for, whilſt ſuch ſalutary benefits may be derived from protecting the repenting ſinner, how much greater will be the ſatisfaction in protecting innocence!

The Orphan Hoſpital alſo, is undoubtedly a moſt excellent charity, and preſerves numbers of poor young creatures from the devouring jaws of ſeduction; and, to the immortal honour of its liberal benefactors, is moſt nobly and ſpiritedly ſupported: yet, it can but contain a ſmall number out of the many who are left deſtitute; and even admitting the Orphan Aſylum and the Magdalen Charity could contain the whole number of theſe unfortunate fugitives, there is ſtill certain ages of admiſſion and diſmiſſion, the extent of which, though I am not certain, I preſume ſeldom exceeds five or ſix and twenty years.

Then

Give me leave then to aſk, what proviſion there is for unfortunate women, who are turned of that period, amongſt whom are great numbers of widows, but juſt in the meridian of their days, who, after a life of affluence, and, perhaps, every eaſe and comfort, are now wandering about through this vale of tears, in the abject and forlorn condition juſt deſcribed; poſſibly driven from their homes by keen adverſity, naked and deſtitute, in the moſt inclement ſeaſon of the year, without a proſpect, or means of any ſort, for providing the common neceſſaries of life, ſince every branch of trade is occupied by theſe uſurpers of a female's right, till, at length, quite weary with fatigue and pining with hunger, the dreaded period arrives, "when, like a hunted bird, ſhe becomes quite exhauſted with fatigue," and wearineſs obliges her to fall to the ground, and become the prey or ſport of every ſchool-boy.

Poor, helpleſs creatures! will no one fly to their relief? They aſſuredly have a claim on the aſſiſtance and compaſſion of every one: and, I flatter myſelf, the generous feelings of the

the humane will no ſooner be ſenſible of their ſufferings, than *all*, who wiſh well to the cauſe of virtue, will lend their aſſiſtance towards aboliſhing ſo deſtructive a precedent; and every lady, that has a wiſh to ſupport the general character of her ſex, will retire with indignation, when offered to be ſerved by any of theſe authors of female deſtruction.

The efficacy of theſe reflections to a feeling and generous mind, that can participate in another's woes, cannot be doubted; yet what will all that pity or all that ſympathy avail, unleſs ſome exertions are uſed towards effecting a redreſs?

Suppoſe no lady would ſuffer herſelf to be ſerved, in the ſhops of theſe effeminate traders, by any of the ſhort-clothed gentry, would it not be a means of compelling all thoſe who chuſe to carry on the tragi-comic farce, to effect the buſineſs under the diſguiſe of gown and petticoat?

But joking apart: believe me, ladies, it is paſt a joke, when poor, unfortunate females are compelled to go without clothing, in order to ſupport an army of Herculian figures

at

at the back of a counter, diſplaying the beauties of a lady's bandeau, or commenting upon the device of a fan.

Fie upon ſuch conduct! let men act like men, and, as men of honour, ſupport the dignity of their character. To hear them talk, they profeſs the fineſt feelings; but what do all theſe profeſſions tend to? is it not an apparent ſoleciſm, that the ſame perſon, in the very moment they profeſs to be friends to civil ſociety, ſhould be loading the defenceleſs with unheard-of oppreſſion? But let us, if you pleaſe, develope theſe aſſertions in the full light of impartial truth.

## TRUTH AND REASON.

*An Imitation from Horace.*

" WHAT applauſe is not due to that excellent youth,
" (The laſt and the beſt of Darius's pages)
" Who wiſely and nobly contended that truth
" Is the majeſty, kingdom, and power of all ages?

" How different the wretch, who to right prefers wrong?
" To the guilt of his lie adding treaſon.
" For ſurely the miſcreant, whoſe treacherous tongue
" Rebels againſt Truth, is a traitor to Reaſon.

" Together

" Together they ſprung from th' Eternal great mind,
" The honour, the peace, and the bond of mankind."

Since truth and reaſon cloſed the laſt ſentence, what is there forbids making the next appeal to juſtice? and enquire, why theſe poor, helpleſs women are to be cut off from all civil ſociety, and that at a period of life which might have been to them the moſt happy. Inſtead of rendering them noxious to community, they might have been uſeful members, as well as good Chriſtians, and, in the end, have died the death of the juſt, having calmly paſſed through life, inſtead of being the dupes of an avaricious ſet of uſeleſs members, who, by their profeſſions, are a degradation to the honourable title of MAN.

What is life? a bare exiſtence, when compared with a life of civil ſecurity and freedom, neither of which do theſe unfortunate women experience: for, notwithſtanding, ſometimes even difficulties are inſtructive, and, in many caſes, may prevent a number of unforeſeen troubles, they cannot profit by their knowledge, from their not being empowered to exerciſe

exercise their talents. It is truly shocking to see such numbers of miserable wretches wandering about without employment, or any human comfort, either dressed up at the cost of their virtue and peace of mind, or in so wretched, forlorn, and abject a state, that they scarcely retain an appearance of their sex; thus dragging on a miserable existence, which nothing but the effects of a religious education can induce them to preserve. For, what is life without hope? and where is there the smallest glimpse of hope for them? they cannot fly from the frowns of the world, which on all sides attack them. Yet how astonishing is it, that the oppressions of these men, who are the authors of so much mischief, should so long have been passed unnoticed!

"But, every one that doeth evil hateth the light;" therefore the sufferings of these poor creatures are hid by the dark shade of misrepresentation. Did every one candidly deliver their sentiments without restraint, would it not be a means of affording a light to the discerning eye of impartiality to examine into these heinous grievances? for where no less

than

than private intereſt is the foundation of ſo much miſery, dragging after it the moſt dreadful conſequences, the origin of which, may we not ſuppoſe, proceeds from one of the three following cauſes, viz. A want of reflection, from its being a precedent of long ſtanding; a wilful blindneſs, through avaricious views; or a downright want of underſtanding. The latter of which we hope is the caſe, that it may reſt in their favour; for, where little is given, little may be required.

But ye of the world, whoſe underſtandings have ſo long been carried down the ſtream of miſrepreſentation, ſuffer not yourſelves to be any longer led away by falſe and miſtaken prejudice, nor let the innocent ſuffer with the guilty; for pity's ſake, ſpare the innocent, although it be at the riſk of ſuffering the guilty to go unpuniſhed; mercy is Heaven's diſtinguiſhed attribute, and contains a greatneſs next to celeſtial.

In ſearching for a date to the era of this deſtructive precedent, wherein men have been made ſubſtitutes in women's occupations, it will be found to be of very long ſtanding; and

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in its infancy might not, nor, perhaps, was not attended with the evils it has ſince produced; for, in thoſe days, when manufactures and commerce were not ſo extenſive, every ſituation and ſcene in life were in a more contracted ſtate, and while the father and the brother were employed in trade, the mother and daughters were employed in the domeſtic concerns of the houſehold. In fact, they were then the manufacturers alſo, and conſequently were never at a loſs for employment; they found enough to do in ſpinning, knitting, and preparing neceſſaries for the uſe of the family, which, being common, was not looked upon as any degradation.

But were the tradeſman, in this refined age, to employ his wife or daughters in any ſuch low capacity, what would the world ſuppoſe, or where would be his credit? Therefore, in exploring the caſe and its evil conſequences, ſhall we not be well convinced, it is not cuſtom alone which ought to conſtitute a right; for what precedent or practice ought to be ſupported upon unjuſt principles. Doubtleſs there have been various precedents, which

ſeemed

ſeemed good at the beginning, and yet have been productive of much evil in the end, as the one in queſtion; at the commencement of which, as I before obſerved, it might be, and was, a very laudable purſuit; for, in thoſe days, when all things were in a more contracted ſtate, and trade not ſo univerſally extended, the father of a family was glad to diſpoſe of his ſons to ſuch mechanical branches of trade as firſt preſented, that his ſon might be empowered to improve or increaſe his little fund, and be able to make a proviſion, not only for himſelf, but for a wife which, in primitive times, he was obliged to endow.

Alas! how much unlike our modern days, when women endow their huſbands, and, with large portions, frequently purchaſe a very heavy bondage.

In fact, the generality of things appear to be diametrically oppoſite to what they were in former times.

We need but look back about three centuries, and then ſee the vaſt change; for example: What would be the conſequence, were a labourer, in the preſent times, to receive no

better wages than a penny a day, which uſed to be the ſtandard even in the reign of Henry VII*. and in the reign of Henry VIII. it did not exceed three halfpence? Muſt not every one allow, ſo ſmall a recompence, in the preſent times, inſufficient to exiſt upon, and much leſs to ſupport a family. Still, in thoſe days, it was found a ſufficient proviſion, and they could live comfortably upon it; but the reaſon is evident; every article of proviſion at that time bore a very inferior price to what it does now. Wheat, for example, which we may call the firſt grand article of proviſion, ſold in King Henry VII.'s reign† at ſo low a price as three ſhillings per quarter, and every other article equally cheap; which enforces a conviction, that through time all things alter. Therefore, to come to the point in view, whilſt all things change according to the ſtate of times and contingencies, why exclude poor females from a ſmall ſhare in the

* Vide ſtat. 11th of Henry VII. and ſtat. 6. of Henry VIII. concerning artificers.

† Vide Baker's Chronicle.

improve-

improvements? it is well known they cannot defend themſelves.

Were a body of miſerable women, be they really virtuous or not, to aſſemble with a petition to parliament, where is the perſon who would be perſuaded to preſent it, particularly when they are all conſidered as worthleſs wretches.

But were a body of men artificers (be their conduct or morals as they may) to offer a repreſentation of grievances, doubtleſs their caſe would be heard, and conſidered, in every ſenſe of the word, both political and humane.

Yet I would gladly believe, theſe differences muſt alone proceed from the defect of not knowing the true ſtate of grievances; for, in every other caſe of oppreſſion, except the one in queſtion, do we not always find a protection from the police of the country? conſequently, there is no fear, but a ſerious inveſtigation will throw open the iron gates of miſrepreſentation, and lead to the avenues of happineſs, both for theſe poor women and the community in general.

I acknowledge, we are too apt to call things juſt, that have been long in practice; and, through ancient cuſtom, theſe oppreſſive tradeſmen act in open defiance of either equity or conſcience, thinking none will call them to account, and they may ſtill ride triumphant upon the ſtream of avarice. But let not a precedent, abounding with ſo much miſchief, any longer diſgrace the age; let not virtue and happineſs any longer be bartered, which, in the preſent caſe, they evidently are, to the abuſe of all civil ſociety, and diſuniting the very bands of mutual benefit and preſervation; nor ſuffer theſe men to monopolize the whole from the female part of the creation, unleſs there is a proviſion made to ſecure them from penury.

Nothing, it is preſumed, can be more reaſonable and juſt, than that thoſe who deprive others of ſubſiſtence ſhould contribute to their ſupport. For what law, either divine or human, will juſtify the continuance of a precedent, which has influence ſufficient to prevail over the virtue of individuals? What ſtatute is there, which grants that men alone ſhall live,

and

and women ſcarcely exiſt?—Is it not an uſurpation which every violator muſt bluſh at, when conſidered in the light it ought to be, as an act of the greateſt injuſtice? Then, drive hence all ſuch diſtreſs: let it not be ſaid, that Britons can cheriſh a wiſh to oppreſs their ſiſters, wives, and mothers, but rather that they are merciful to the fatherleſs and the widow; and though the miſchief of this iniquitous precedent ſhould lie too deep to be cured by any thing leſs than a total ſuppreſſion, can it be called an invaſion of right? No; it is only the ſuppreſſion of an uſurped prerogative; and cannot fail to be productive of every good, not only in clearing the ſtreets of proſtitutes, but in providing a ſufficient number of proper and fit hands, *in time of peace*, for the various manufactories which, it muſt be granted, it is always the intereſt of Britain to cheriſh; and in ſuch calamitous times as theſe, by having ready a ſufficient number of ſoldiers and ſailors fit for ſervice, without being driven to ſo many expenſive and oppreſſive expedients: independent of the little need there is of throwing any thing in the way to ſend

ſuch colonies abroad, to the prodigious expence of the nation, or ſuffering ſuch numbers of men idling at the back of a counter, when they might be employed to ſo much better advantage. The enormous expence attending all theſe things, muſt be viſible to every one who will take the trouble to look; therefore, it is unneceſſary to weary my readers with a recital of theſe heavy expences or grievances, farther than is abſolutely neceſſary; for a ſhort reflection muſt convince every enquirer, that to countenance this evil precedent, is not only robbing poor females of their birthrights, which they are not empowered to contend for, but is actually robbing the whole country of its right, as well as ſafety and happineſs, and doubtleſs is tending to impoveriſh the nation.

"But view them cloſer, craft and fraud appear,
"E'en liberty itſelf is barter'd here."

GOLDSMITH.

Theſe are facts, not founded on theory alone, which might be greatly enlarged upon, were the pen of information in the hand of one of thoſe humane, generous, and learned

learned philanthropiſts, who diſtinguiſh themſelves by a cheerful and ready exertion in the cauſe of juſtice and retribution, and who, being converſant in the language of the law, might trace all the precedents, acts, and repeals, with their conveniencies and inconveniencies, from Adam to Magna Charta, and from thence to the preſent day; when, alas! it is a female's province only (if a mother) to nurſe, cheriſh, and watch over her darling ſon, who, perhaps, in maturity, may be the foremoſt in adding to the weight of this oppreſſive burden. "Art thou one of them!" ſaid Julius Cæſar to his ſon, when he ſaw him amongſt thoſe that murdered him. That went deeper to his heart than the ſwords of all his enemies.

Let then the claim to theſe female occupations be developed; let not an indelible ſtain be fixed on the character of men; for, when the affair is finally diſcuſſed, will theſe grievances ſound credible to the ear of poſterity? Let not then our annals be ſtained with ſuffering a longer continuance of ſo much miſery, but let an immediate interference take place.

Why ſhall the deliberate deſtroyers of happineſs be ſuffered to continue, without ſome notice being taken of their inhuman and avaricious guilt? To refuſe a compliance with this requeſt, is to become enemies to peace and happineſs: to enjoy the neceſſaries of life is an invaluable right, which each individual expects to ſhare in common with his neighbour; and, in fact, is what all do ſhare, more or leſs, except the identical women in queſtion.

The very poor, who are born in an abject ſtate, are taught from their infancy to ſtruggle through life in the ſame manner they ſee their needy connections: bread muſt be had, and all the inſtructions they can poſſibly get, is in what way to obtain it. Conſequently, if by labour and induſtry, they can acquire a ſufficiency to exiſt upon, they are perfectly at eaſe, without beſtowing a ſingle thought upon to-morrow.

But the poor, unfortunate woman, who has ſeen better days, and been reared and educated with tenderneſs and care, ſhe it is that feels her broken ſlumbers can no longer give relief

to

to her weary limbs. Her inability to wreſtle with difficulties are great indeed; eſpecially when ſhe finds her whole endeavours fruitleſs: and, what is ſtill as bad, by running to and fro, in purſuit of ſome means for bread, (which ſhe is not able to obtain) the ſhrill voice of cenſure, or the deſtructive whiſper of calumny, having breathed ſuch a poiſonous vapour over her character, ſhe is deſpiſed by all, in the manner deſcribed in the foregoing pages, and irremediably doomed to ſink, never more to riſe; for, who will admit a woman of loſt reputation into their houſe? O, cruel cenſure! what muſt be the ſenſations of oppreſſed innocence, under the cenſure of guilt! Even what is it they do not feel, on the bare appellation of idle and diſorderly, when they have tried every expedient to obtain employment, though to no effect?

Under ſuch a preſſure of misfortunes, they muſt bear their ſorrows in ſilence, unknown and unpitied! and muſt frequently put on a face of cheerful ſerenity, when their hearts are torn with ſecret grief. Thus they paſs their time in ſorrow, till they meet the

fatal

fatal alternative, either to be paſſive under the horrors of a priſon, or compound for their preſervation, by entering under the infernal roof of vice for protection.

When ſuch an alternative is preſented, what is to be expected? Should they evade the latter by conforming to the former, what is to be the advantage? I believe, it is generally allowed, that all priſons, or places of confinement, are but poor ſchools for virtue; and that youth and inexperience, or even thoſe of a more advanced age, ſeldom return to the world without being, in ſome degree, contaminated; for it is not to be ſuppoſed, that theſe poor, miſerable mortals are invulnerable. Indeed, ſhould they even paſs through theſe tracts unpolluted, it is next to impoſſible they ſhould ſtill eſcape deſtruction. After the death of kindred, faithleſsneſs of friends, misfortunes, and diſgrace, where are they to find a plank to ſave them from the wreck, where they ſee ſo many toſſing up and down before them? and may very applicably ſay, with Pope's Sappho,

" Shall fortune ſtill in one ſad tenor run,
" And ſtill increaſe the woes ſo ſoon begun?"

But it is yet to be hoped, the charitable and humane will ſtep forward in the cauſe, and no longer ſuffer the noble faculties of the underſtanding to remain buried in a torpid ſtate of acquieſcence to outward appearances, whilſt ſuch numbers are labouring under the moſt pitiable diſtreſs, and ſo many honeſt, induſtrious tradeſmen and mechanics are obliged to contribute to the cauſe, which the profligacy of theſe diſtreſſed women brings upon the community.—Although it be ſuppoſed the moſt judicious cannot foreſee or provide againſt every fraud or accident, yet, from the deep penetration and ſtrict juſtice of ſuch as are in power, there is not a doubt, but ſome plan will be adopted for the benefit of the whole, and ſome expedient thought of, as a temporary relief, for theſe diſtreſſed women, until a more permanent arrangement of things can take place. Indeed, it is poſſible ſome difficulties may ariſe, from the complication of the undertaking, yet what is it human

man efforts cannot effect, when aided by divine promiſe? which ſays, "Whatever you do unto one of the leaſt of theſe, ye have done it unto me."

An undertaking commenced upon ſuch grounds, muſt infallibly be productive of great good, and in that ſtep alone, can we fail to ſee many of theſe uſurpers drop away in confuſion and ſhame, whilſt the remainder, being held up to public ridicule, which they ſo juſtly merit, muſt quickly follow? for, ſhould they be ſuffered to continue in their effeminate and unmanly employment, and neither be forced nor ſhamed out of their evil courſes, where will they ſtop, or what will be the conſequence?

"But whatſoever thou findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in the grave, whither thou goeſt*."

* Eccleſiaſtes, ch. ix, v. 10.

THE

# FEMALE ADVOCATE.

## PART SECOND.

*A Continuation of the foregoing.*

*Which demonſtrates that the Frailty of Female Virtue more frequently originates from embarraſſed Circumſtances, than from a depravity of Diſpoſition.*

HAVING given a faint ſketch of the grand cauſe which precludes women from partaking in the comforts of life, let us next proceed to the avenue which leads to ſo much miſery. Doubtleſs, through the viciſſitudes of human affairs, neither great riches nor great happineſs

are

are always permanent; the dark and crooked paths of fate are, by the unerring hand of Divine Providence, hid from mortal eyes: nor can we ſee into futurity. "To-day we are here, and to-morrow in the grave;" or, according to the Proverbs, chap. xxvii. v. 1. "Who knoweth what a day may bring forth?" For how often does death, inſatiable death, unexpectedly ſnatch, in a moment, the indulgent parent from the beloved child, who is at once left at large in the wide world, perhaps in the morning of her days, and in all the ſimplicity of artleſs youth, without a proviſion, or any means of obtaining one. Pitiable object! thy fate ſeems hard indeed: yet ſo it but too frequently happens to hundreds, beſides thyſelf. Where wilt thou go, to ſecure thee from real want? A pariſh workhouſe is but a poor conſolation for ſo great a loſs, at a period when neither reaſon nor religion is ripened into maturity, to moderate the grievance. But, if, perhaps, a friend ſtep forward, the Aſylum for the protection of Orphan Girls may receive the poor fugitive; in which bleſſed and happy inſtitution, through time, the memory

of

of her woeful loſs, in parents and proviſion, may, in ſome degree, be wiped away in the benevolence of her new protectors, who not only provide for her temporal, but alſo for her ſpiritual concerns, in inſtructing her as a good Chriſtian and a uſeful member. But, alas! ſmall is the number which this inſtitution can admit, when compared with the vaſt numbers left in ſimilar ſituations. And for thoſe, who are more advanced in age, to what ſtandard can they repair? It is true, neceſſity will teach people to exert themſelves, who have nothing but their own induſtry to depend upon, and conſequently they ſeek for a female occupation. But how great their ſurpriſe, and inexpreſſible their grief, to find, like the reſt, that they are repulſed in every purſuit of induſtry, whereby they might expect a maintenance!

Good Heavens! what courſe can a poor, young creature purſue, when, from the quick tranſition from good to evil, at that early period of life, when diſcernment has not made its way to a knowledge of the world, ſhe is at once on the verge of the precipice, where ſo many have unhappily been loſt? Without a pilot,

pilot, ſhe finds herſelf launched out into the ocean of the world, where ſhe floats about for awhile, until ſhe perceives her danger, and would gladly retreat; but neither meeting protection nor aid, neceſſity drives her back, and ſhe ſhortly engages in the diſſipation of the age, and at once becomes the object of ſcorn and contempt, and the real food for ſcandal; in which deplorable ſtate ſhe finds herſelf involved, even before ſhe is aware of her danger, which no ſooner preſents itſelf to her view, but ſhe endeavours to retreat and clear away the black vapour; but, alas! though ſhort-lived the experiment, it is now too late! for the miſty cloud of obloquy has diſcoloured her reputation, and ſhe is now doubly diſtant from a friend to defend her, or point out a mode of redreſs; for the unfeeling part of the world exclaims, in the words of a much-admired writer,

"How ſhall I then your helpleſs fame defend?
"'Twill then be infamy to ſeem your friend." POPE.

No: her ſupplication is not noticed, notwithſtanding

withſtanding "God hath given to every one the charge of his neighbour."

This excellent charge being ſo very ſeldom put in practice, ſuperadded to her youth and inexperience, ſhe not being ſufficiently armed with that fortitude, which is ſo neceſſary in her time of trial, and ſeeing the frowns of the world againſt her, ſhe naturally perſeveres, and even launches out ſtill farther in the ſtream of thoſe falſe and miſtaken pleaſures, which cannot fail to terminate in her deſtruction; and, perhaps, at length, ſhe triumphs in obtaining (what ſhe thinks) protection from thoſe whoſe acknowledged right it is to guard the weaker ſex.

But here, alas! under the ſpecious name of friendſhip, ſhe too ſoon ſees her miſtake, and finds herſelf the real object of diſtreſs, abandoned by the world, and left to her own bitter reflections; until the kind hand of Providence once more takes her under protection, and admits her a member of that humane charity, the Magdalen; where, in a ſmall degree, ſhe is once more permitted to taſte a portion of comfort, by the cheering rays of

Chriſtian charity; and her oppreſſed ſpirits are ſomewhat enlivened by the following ſweet and comfortable diſcourſe from the Matron, on her admiſſion into that moſt excellent charity.

" You cannot be inſenſible of the kindneſs of providence in bringing you hither; the wretched ſituation you are reduced to ſeems to offer you no other relief. Your intereſt and ours is the ſame; we mean to do you all the good we can, and you to have good done to you; we mean to render you happy in this world, and what is of much greater moment, in the next alſo *."

How can charity be better employed than in taking care of the ſoul as well as the body? This is, perhaps, the moſt comfortable diſcourſe ſhe has heard ſince death cloſed the lips of her dear parents. Yet how much greater would be the charity for protecting the innocent, than in reclaiming the guilty? Prevention muſt certainly be better than cure; and

* Vide Rules and Regulations of the Magdalen Charity.

were

were there a capacious eſtabliſhment for induſtry, built upon ſuch a baſis as would form a diſcrimination between the well-bred female, who is reduced by the unſeen hand of fate, and the very poor and abject, whoſe birth has deprived them of the knowledge of refinement or delicacy; what crouds of unprovided women would flock to the ſtandard!

But, in the mean time, it cannot fail to afford infinite ſatisfaction to the humane contributors, by enabling the poor penitent to repeat the following hymn of admiſſion.

" Riſe, O my ſoul! the hours review,
" When aw'd by guilt and fear,
" Thou durſt not heaven for mercy ſue,
" Nor hope for pity here.

" Dried are thy tears, thy griefs are fled,
" Diſpell'd each bitter care;
" See, heaven itſelf has lent its aid,
" To raiſe thee from deſpair.

" Here then, O God! thy work fulfil,
" And from thy mercy's throne,
" Vouchſafe me ſtrength to do thy will,
" And to reſiſt my own.

" So ſhall my ſoul each power employ,
" Thy mercies to adore,
" Whilſt heav'n itſelf proclaims with joy,
" One pardon'd ſinner more."

How nearly do the humane contributors to this excellent charity imitate the compaſſionate ſentence of our bleſſed Lord, when he bade the offending woman " Go, and ſin no more?" For there is ſcarcely a period in life, when the moſt irregular characters may not be reclaimed. It is through misfortunes and a want of employment, that ſuch as theſe poor, helpleſs, young creatures have brought ſo great an additional load of heavy misfortunes upon their guilty heads; yet, we are told, there is joy in heaven at the repentance of a ſinner:—What a bleſſed inſtitution, then, to provide a means for that purpoſe!

Human nature is undoubtedly liable to corruption, yet it is impregnated with the ſeeds of virtue; and when the mind is properly cultivated, they will quickly grow up and ripen into good works. It muſt afford a moſt lively and pleaſing ſenſation to the humane and ſympathiſing breaſt, in contributing their endea-

endeavours, to let the memory of former woes be loſt in the enjoyment of preſent bleſſings.

Compaſſion is a heaven-born virtue, and not only conſoles the innocent, but is the firſt ſtep to reclaim the guilty: a kind and gentle treatment muſt ever be efficacious, when harſh proceedings, in general, drive to deſperation. For the truth of this, we need but ſcrutinize our own hearts, (the golden rule is a moſt excellent guide) and there ſee, on a ſerious inveſtigation, if any one of us is not more ready to comply, in any caſe whatever, by lenient means, than from the force of peremptory methods.

Yes: the moſt obdurate ſinner, if poſſeſſed of one ſingle ſpark of grace, on the repeated calm admonitions of a good Chriſtian, cannot ſuppreſs that ſpark from kindling into a flame of gratitude, at leaſt, and muſt bluſh at their perfidy; whereas the hardened wretch, by conſtant upbraidings and ſevere treatment, becomes callous to every thing.

Therefore, theſe poor young women, who have, through extreme neceſſity, been driven

to criminal and unlawful purſuits, are not to be deſpiſed or ſunk beneath our care, but cheriſhed and ſupported, in order to reclaim their wicked courſe of life. What ſays the oracle of truth?—Whilſt we have time, let us do good, for the night cometh, when no man can work.

For the opulent, and thoſe in power, to ſuppoſe they have done their part, in helping to relieve their ſpiritual wants only, is a miſtake; ſo long as the ſoul and body act in uniſon, proviſion muſt be made for their temporal neceſſities alſo. What ſays St. James, chap. ii. v. 15 and 16. "If a brother or ſiſter be naked, and deſtitute of daily food, and one of you ſay unto them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled, notwithſtanding you give them not thoſe things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"

But in the humane charity of the Magdalen, as well as in others, the wants of the needful are plentifully ſupplied, both as to ſoul and body, and as many deſtitute objects received as the foundation of the inſtitution will admit; and, in general, ſuch as theſe it

is

is of whom we have been diſcourſing (if in London) who reap the benefit. Their ages of admiſſion being from ſixteen to twenty-ſix years, between which periods they, in general, find their fatal miſtake, and are happy to find an aſylum under ſo beneficent an inſtitution. Or if, unhappily, their ſituations in life are too far diſtant, or other caſual accidents prevent them from obtaining the benefit, they muſt inevitably fall a victim to their misfortunes and vice, and the world's contempt. Which brings to my remembrance a poem, entitled The Country Church Yard.

" Where the long graſs obſcures yon briery grave,
" And antique yews their branches ſadly wave,
" A wretched female, with the ſilent dead,
" Unnotic'd, unlamented, reſts her head.
" No weeping friend is ſeen to deck her bier,
" Or o'er her aſhes ſhed the tender tear:
" But, buried in the tomb's ſad mouldering heap,
" Her ſorrows and her fate in ſilence ſleep.
" 'Tis beauteous Jeſſey's frail, neglected ſhade,
" Whoſe pale form ſwells the ſolitary glade.
" Ah, hapleſs fair! I hear the ſtill ſlow gale,
" Which bore thy death-bell through the hollow vale,

" When thy ſad ſpirit, freed from miſery's load,
" In trembling expectation, ſought its laſt abode.
" Though vice awhile obſcur'd thy riſing fame,
" And ſtamp'd with early infamy thy name.
" Yet o'er thy grave, mid ſober evening's ſhade,
" The muſe with pitying tear ſhall ſwell the glade,
" And tell the villain's guilt, whoſe perjur'd art,
" From virtue's path allur'd thy ſimple heart,
" When without parents, in that early day,
" When youth moſt wants a guide to lead the way,
" Then falſe to honour, truth, and promis'd love,
" Left thee alone in life's wide courſe to move."

Notwithſtanding the misfortunes of ſuch poor young creatures are truly pitiable, others there are whoſe caſe is ſtill more lamentable. But to conduct my readers to the various avenues which lead to the deſtruction and miſery of the female part of the creation, would ſwell this volume to a greater bulk than is intended; therefore ſhall content myſelf with juſt touching upon a few characters, who have been plunged into this dreadful pit of deſtruction, by the known miſconduct of connections, or the miſhap of human events. From ſuch as theſe it is we muſt gather our information. Doubtleſs, imagination might lead to a number

ber of viſionary flights, but, by engaging with perſonalities, the faculties are confined, and external appearances muſt diſtinguiſh the objects.

Let us then commence with a gentleman of ſmall, independent fortune; for, as it is the general maxim through life, that every one ſhould endeavour to outvie his neighbour, the gentleman alſo muſt keep up appearances for the benefit of his family (as he is pleaſed to term it;) and, in the preſent day, where do we ſee the father or mother of a family, with an independent fortune, be it ever ſo ſmall, who would not be ſhocked at the bare idea of placing their daughter in the world in ſuch ſituations as would enable them to riſe, through their own induſtry and merit, or fit them for becoming wives to ſome honeſt and induſtrious tradeſman?—No: that would be a degradation which muſt not take place. It is the etiquette of the times for the daughters to be bred fine ladies, although it be without a fortune, either dependent or independent, to ſupport it. As for trade, that is out of the queſtion. The ſons indeed are differently provided: the eldeſt,

deſt, in courſe, inherits the paternal eſtate, and the younger ones are placed in the church, the army, the navy, or at the bar; and others, again are genteelly ſituated in the mercantile world: the whole of which are fit profeſſions for a gentleman, and by which, if they have merit and ſucceſs, they may acquire a competency.

But for the female part of the family, what appears in their favour? what proſpects have they in life?—The parents die, and leave them, without a proviſion, a burden upon their connections; which forms the firſt ſtep to deprive them of friends as well as ſubſiſtence. A miſerable inheritance, to be their beſt and only portion! What can be ſaid in behalf of ſuch parents? can their eaſy compliance with the faſhion of the times form any apology for ſuch a miſtaken conduct?—This ſurely cannot be called true paternal affection, to entail upon theſe helpleſs young creatures ſuch a ſucceſſion of miſery as muſt eventually enſue. Is not this a ſufficient definition of the ſecond divine commandment, that "the ſins of the father ſhall deſcend to their children,

children, to the third and fourth generation." Which under ſuch circumſtances is juſtly verified; for, what leſs than a miracle can deſtroy the entail of miſery brought upon helpleſs innocence, by the ſins of their parents? which, however harſh the term, is worſe than Herod's cruelty; that could only affect the body, but by a compliance with this miſtaken folly of the day, there is a great chance of its affecting the ſoul alſo.

What was it brought ruin upon the firſt diſtreſſed female, who was admitted into the Magdalen Charity; and what but a miracle led her to taſte comfort*?

What numbers of helpleſs and deſtitute young women there are, who, ſeeing themſelves neglected and deſpiſed by their connections, notwithſtanding all the refined and delicate ideas which their education and mode of bringing up have poſſeſſed them with, would gladly endeavour, through neceſſity, to make up the deficiency of their parents' neglect, by

* See a book, entitled The Magdalen, or a Hiſtory of the Firſt Penitents received into that charitable Aſylum.

putting

putting themſelves forward in the world, in order to obtain a ſupport. But, alas! to their ſorrow, they quickly ſee it is not in their power; for, under their preſent circumſtances, "the world is not their friend, nor the world's laws;" and what was not effected by their parents, cannot poſſibly be obtained by an inexperienced young woman.

Indeed, it is frequently ſaid, the female part of the creation are by far the moſt ready in cenſuring their own ſex. But permit me to aſk, would it not be highly reprehenſible in any lady to countenance even the appearance of a guilty conduct? By ſo doing, it is not only the means of encouraging vice, but muſt unavoidably incur cenſure upon herſelf, which, above all other misfortunes in life, is the moſt to be dreaded, ſince a female character, once loſt, is for ever irretrievable. But, in juſtice to my own ſex, I would gladly hope, there is not a female, who really conſiders the many horrid miſchiefs which are the attendants upon cenſure, who will ever ſuffer the ſmalleſt intimation thereof to eſcape the bounds

bounds of her own breaſt, unleſs through the moſt flagrant proofs of guilt.

Out of the many, ſome there are, no doubt, who, to colour their own vicious lives, are ever ready to murder the character of any one, without taking the ſmalleſt thought or concern as to the conſequences, nor even ſparing the innocent with any greater degree of lenity than they would the guilty. But of this claſs we hope there are but few; for, why ſhould it be ſuppoſed that female objects in diſtreſs, particularly thoſe who have youth and beauty on their ſide, muſt unavoidably be objects of contempt rather than pity? From what motive can this certain part of the ſex continue to load the ſufferings of theſe poor, helpleſs women with reviling and contempt? None other, I muſt repeat it, but to draw a veil over their own vicious lives; for neither religion nor virtue ever countenanced ſo much injuſtice. To load the poor ſufferer with calumny, is cruel indeed; ſuffice it, ſhe has to ſtruggle with the hardſhips of penury!

Let them be traced along from the moment that fate's afflicting hand is ſtretched out againſt them:

them: trace them through every ſtage of life; and then ſee if they are not the moſt pitiable of all mortals! Then, how can the time of the opulent part of the ſex be better employed, than in ſearching into the ſource of their ſorrows, and endeavouring to obtain redreſs? To inveſtigate the cauſe will beſpeak a remedy near at hand. But for a continuation of the various diſtreſſes which poor females are ſubject to, we need but take a general review, and repreſent the caſe as it evidently is, which will ſave the unpleaſant taſk of uſing names: for, it is to be feared, few there are who have any knowledge of life, but can reaſon upon this ſubject, if not through fatal ſelf-experience, yet through experimental obſervations on others. For example: how often do we ſee whole families entirely ruined by the improper conduct of a huſband or father, who, through giving way to ſome predominant vice, at once overwhelms the whole of his family in ruin and diſtreſs, or, at leaſt, the female part of it, who, not being able to defend themſelves, or ſeek redreſs, are liable to every misfortune.

How

How far the wife was intended to be the ſlave to her huſband, I know not, but certain we are, ſhe was deſigned to be his friend, his companion, and united part; or, according to the gentlemen's phraſe, his *better part*; and yet how often do we ſee her ſinking under the burden of a houſehold load, whilſt the unfeeling huſband is laviſhing away the ſubſtance which ought to be for the comfort and ſupport of a family? Yet ſuch unnatural beings there are, who, by giving way to ſome unlawful paſſion, can, without ſcruple or remorſe, trample under foot all laws, divine and human, and with impunity bring wretchedneſs upon thoſe he is bound to ſupport: notwithſtanding St. Paul tells us, "if any one provide not for his own, and eſpecially thoſe of his own houſe, he hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel."

Let us but look at the many unhappy females, who come to ruin through mercenary marriages. How many are the inſtances of young women, who have been brought up in affluence, and reared with all the tender care and attention, which are in the power of

of maternal affection to beſtow; yet, perhaps, through her youthful follies and credulity, ſhe is led away by the artifice and falſe pretenſions of one of theſe mercenary men, on whom ſhe cheerfully beſtows her patrimony, whether acquired by inheritance, or the ſmiles of fortune upon the honeſt induſtry of her deceaſed parents, avails not, for her expected happineſs is vaniſhed in empty air, and ſhe is quickly expoſed to all the ills of fate.

" O thoughtleſs mortals! ever blind to fate,
" Too ſoon dejected, and too ſoon elate.
" Sudden their honours ſhall be ſnatch'd away,
" And doom'd for ever this victorious day." POPE.

As leading to a further explanation, let us repreſent a caſe which very frequently happens. A gentleman's daughter, one of theſe well-bred young ladies, which was ſpoken of at the beginning of this diſcourſe; or be it a tradeſman's daughter, it matters not, they being equally trained up in the ſame liberal plan of female education, married to a reſpectable and worthy tradeſman, who, we will ſay, according to the common run of the times, has made

made choice of a very proper partner for ſuperintending the domeſtic concerns of his houſehold, and conducting a table with taſte; which, according to the beau monde, muſt undoubtedly be complied with, ſince his credit in trade ſo greatly depends upon appearances; and however great may be his diſlike to the practice, yet *he* it is that is abſolutely obliged to comply with the cuſtom of the times, and make a figure in life, in order to ſupport the credit of his trade; a precedent big with every evil conſequence, yet he muſt comply, and act like his neighbour, if he expects to receive neighbour's fare. Therefore, before we cenſure or condemn ſuch conduct in any one individual, let us, if you pleaſe, place choice and neceſſity in the ſcales of juſtice, and ſee which will preponderate.

I recollect an obſervation upon this ſubject ſome time ago, made by a noble and very learned man, the Earl of ——. Says his lordſhip, "it is the tradeſman and mechanic who are under the neceſſity of making a figure in life, in order to catch notice and obtain credit in their line of buſineſs." But, continued his

lordſhip, "for ſuch as me there is no occaſion, and conſequently we can ſave whilſt they are obliged to ſpend: we can live as we pleaſe, dreſs as we pleaſe, and, in fine, act as we pleaſe; for our independence and anceſtry will always command reſpect, and enable us to do as we like."

I muſt confeſs, I thought it was a hard caſe, that ſo many ſenſible, clever men, of an inferior claſs, with regard to pecuniary matters, ſhould abſolutely be held down for what was not a fault; but, after a moment's conſideration, I could not help joining in the validity of his lordſhip's opinion. Although I knew, at the ſame time, his lordſhip was frequently ridiculed for the meanneſs of his table and dreſs; yet, it occurred to me, that *did not* eraſe any names from his lordſhip's rent-roll; though the ſame conduct might occaſion a great deficiency in a tradeſman's ledger.

In fine, need we advance any further than Change-alley for a confirmation, that it is in compliance with evil cuſtoms, and a conformity to deſtructive precedent, that bring on ſuch a train of misfortunes, with the greateſt force,

force, which is ſure to fall where there is the leaſt reſiſtance? How frequent and ſudden are the fluctuations in the ſtocks, owing to the artifices of ſtock-jobbers, under ſome falſe pretence or other; notwithſtanding it is a practice ſo highly deteſted, both by government and the generality of the parties concerned, yet appearances take the lead; ſo that, however wrong the practice, ſince the tradeſman finds the abſolute neceſſity of acting like his neighbour, no doubt but a generous public will either point out an expedient, or abſolve *him*, at leaſt, from cenſure, let the conſequence prove how it may. Pope ſays,

"True conſciencious honour is to feel no ſin,
"He's arm'd without that's innocent within:"

and very juſtly ſo, *with regard* to men; but for poor women, the weight of all theſe grievances muſt unavoidably reſt upon them, as the weakeſt ſex; who, having ſtruggled through the labyrinth of misfortunes, no ſooner arrives at the gate of induſtry, viz. *female occupations*, than they find it ſhut, and men, ſo much ſtronger, and in power, the porters at the door.

So, begging pardon for the digreſſion, we will leave theſe poor unfortunate women at the gate, and peeping through the wicket to no effect, till we proceed with our young couple, who journey on a few years through this maze of life, a life that ſeems calculated for felicity, happy in each other, and bleſſed with a riſing progeny, which, in courſe becomes the mother's care, whilſt the father, attentive to the intereſt of his family, endeavours to extend his trade for the mutual advantage of all; and thus tied with the ſilken bands of unity, they paſs their days in one continued round of bliſs, actuated by the amiable endearments of the affectionate father, the fond huſband, and the generous friend. But, alas! how frequently does the malice of fate unſeen, purſue, and often blaſt, the happineſs of human enjoyments.

" Ah gentle pair! ye little think how nigh
" Your change approaches, when all theſe delights
" Will vaniſh and deliver ye to woe,
" More woe, the more your taſte is now of joy."

MILTON.

Next, let us ſuppoſe, which ſuppoſition too is frequently realized, that the father of this happy family, whom we have juſt left in the ſunſhine of proſperity, and in the full enjoyment of conjugal and paternal bliſs, is ſnatched away by the hand of death, and leaves his diſconſolate widow, in the meridian of her days, ſurrounded by her innocent offspring, who muſt now look up to her alone for protection, which even herſelf may ſtand in need of.

How keen, how poignant muſt be her grief at ſuch a ſeparation, when, at once, ſhe is robbed of a tender huſband, and her children of an indulgent father! Yet, like a true Chriſtian, ſhe endeavours to arm herſelf with ſuch fortitude as is neceſſary to ſupport her in the time of trial; and by the help of reaſon and religion, ſhe begins to revive, and flatters herſelf with new hopes, in the many comforts ſhe is to receive from her darling children.

Short-ſighted mortal! ſhe now begins to take new courage, from having ſubdued her ſtubborn heart to ſubmit, as ſhe thinks, to her greateſt affliction; which, alas! is no more than a prelude to her future misfortunes: for

her late huſband's concerns come next to be adjuſted, when it is found there is a very ſmall proviſion, if any, left for herſelf and helpleſs children: for the deceaſed huſband, having been under the neceſſity of deceiving the world by the vile pretext of appearances, has now involved his family in the unavoidable neceſſity of ſeeing the world had deceived him; the dreadful conſequences of which they are now left to ſtruggle with. Theſe are real trials: yet how frequently do they happen! and now, at once, are all her expectations of future happineſs blaſted; an intervening cloud has darkened the ſcene, and that maternal triumph which uſed to gladden the face of the fond mother, is now done away by the dark gloom of adverſity; and her ſorrows are like the impetuous torrent. A family, brought up and educated with the idea of being gentlemen and ladies, who have juſt been figuring away in the gaieties of life, to find themſelves entangled in a wilderneſs of miſery, without money, and conſequently without friends, or any means of ſupport, requires more than human ſtrength to combat; for, in ſuch a melancholy

lancholy ſituation, independent of real want, the ſtruggles of reluctant nature are not eaſy to ſuppreſs. The parent, the virtuous and tender mother, ſees her darling offſpring, with all their innocence about them, upon the verge of deſtruction, yeſterday, in the full enjoyment of all the happineſs this world can beſtow, and to-day turned adrift into the wide world, attended with all thoſe fine and delicate feelings which nature, education, and a pious example could beſtow. Yet, all cannot ſave them from the cruel hand of fate, the die is caſt, and they muſt now bid adieu to the comforts of life, and plunge forward in an ocean of miſery; for, by this time, their ſmall fund being nearly, if not quite, exhauſted, the diſtreſſed mother finds the abſolute neceſſity of making her unhappy ſituation known to ſome relation, or former acquaintance, which ſhe had uſed to call friend. But, alas! ſhe has yet to learn, the world in general takes but little concern for the fate of individuals, and too oft, will ſooner upbraid than relieve diſtreſs; and ſo precarious is the poſſeſſion of friendſhip, that, *in general*, on the approach of

diſtreſs, it diſſolves like ſnow under the rays of the ſun, or evaporates, like ether, at the approach of poverty: yet, ſuch an unfeeling claſs there are, who, in proſperity, uſed to extol her conduct; and are, perhaps, at the very moment decking out themſelves, table, and family after her example, and yet can be the firſt to brand her name with obloquy.

O, cruel cenſure, are not the pangs of diſtreſs and poverty enough to bear! is this Chriſtian charity! is this acting the part of the good Samaritan! Yet, yet, it is paſt diſpute, that ſuch diſtreſs does afflicted poverty experience, although the cordial of friendſhip, and the benevolent ſympathy of fellow mortals would ſo very much alleviate: however, by woeful experience, beginning to ſee the world in its true colours, ſhe ſees her only reſource is in the conſolation of religion, and in an humble ſubmiſſion to the Divine Will; and with this ſhield, ſhe endeavours to guard herſelf and innocent ſuffering offspring from the impending, ſtorm which appears ready to burſt upon their unfortunate heads. Still their pious and laudable endeavours will

not

not alone ſupply the neceſſity of extreme want; they are mortal, and conſequently both nature and duty preſs hard upon the unhappy mother, to look into the world for a means of ſupport; for now every proſpect of happineſs to her future days is blackened by anxious care, and, perhaps, at a period which might have been expected the happieſt of her life: but ſince adverſity has taught her ſubmiſſion, and ſhe finds ſhe has to climb up the ſteep of difficulty, with her children dragging after her like ſo many clogs at her feet, to retard her progreſs, her firſt ſtep is to look out for ſituations for her ſons, to whom Providence having denied an education, ſo as to command ſuch ſituations in life as the generality of men are enabled to look up to, and without the aid of connections, or friends, to lead them out into the world; if the poor mother can obtain for them a ſituation at the back of a counter, it is the higheſt ſtep in life which ſhe can ſue for, *or expect*; *and ſuch as theſe*, indeed, are an exception as to filling women's occupations; for, if nothing elſe preſents, what are they to do? But for the poor mother,

mother, who perhaps has not yet attained her thirty-fifth year, and her ſtill unfortunate daughters, what is there in their favour? without money, friends, character, or means of induſtry, they are unavoidably doomed to wretchedneſs, if any thing on earth can be wretched, notwithſtanding her utmoſt exertions, as well as her pious and exemplary conduct to her children, who, not inſenſible to her merit, endeavour to ſoothe her ſorrows by their tender regard and fond affections.

Alas! what can they do, they all ſeem to look up to the poor mother for aid, who has it not in her power even to help herſelf. She now takes a ſerious retroſpect of her paſt life, and the mode of edcuation in which herſelf and children have been trained, and moſt ardently does ſhe wiſh they had been reared with induſtry at leaſt, inſtead of all thoſe bright accompliſhments, which muſt unavoidably be loſt in their misfortunes. But, ſince there is no recalling paſt time, their only redreſs is, to try to get into ſome ſituation where their endeavours and exertions, at leaſt, will make up the deficiency of their want of knowledge. What, but ſuch

diſtreſs

diſtreſs as this, and the want of a proper education, *or trade*, is it which fill the papers daily with wants of every kind? "Wants a ſituation to ſuperintend;" or, "A perſon who has ſeen better days, would be glad to undertake;" or, "Wants a ſituation, as companion or aſſiſtant, &c.;" little ſuppoſing how frequently theſe advertiſements get anſwered by that arrogant ſet of mortals we before ſpoke of, with the common phraſe of, "I want no gentlewomen, or gentlewomen's daughters;" and although this aſſertion may ſound harſh to the ears of the humane and ſympathiſing part of the community, be aſſured, this and ſuch like unfeeling cruelty is exerciſed over the unfortunate, even by their own ſex, and thoſe whoſe profeſſed feelings are ſo fine, as to ſhed tears over a novel, or faint at the rehearſal of a tragedy; however, of theſe we hope the number is ſmall.——Seeing theſe women are excluded all benefit in trade, what elſe can they have recourſe to, but to ſeek an aſylum under the roof of the affluent, in ſome menial capacity? which brings to my memory the contents of the tenth letter of the firſt Magdalen who

who was admitted into that moſt excellent charity.

" I was reduced," ſays ſhe, " to the manifeſt danger of ſtarving. I would have attempted the moſt laborious work, but no one would try me, although I offered my labour at half price ; but even my induſtry was made an argument againſt me: I muſt, they ſaid, be very bad to be reduced to that, and they ſuppoſed, I intended to ſteal the other part of my wages.

" To be willing and able to work, and yet to ſtarve for want of employment, ſeemed a hard fate, yet it touched no heart but my own."

What a miſerable proſpect for helpleſs innocence! What a ſhocking caſe, that poor unfortunate females ſhould be denied the privilege of obtaining a ſupport by ſervitude, after being precluded earning an honeſt maintenance, by any other means of induſtry, merely to make way for a ſet of beings who are much better calculated for more manly employments; and, in particular, at a time when ſo many men are required in defence of their country. Beſides, if there is not employment for the whole,

whole, and ſome muſt feel the inconveniencies, are not men much better calculated to bear hardſhips than women? at leaſt, is it not always ſuppoſed and conſidered by men, that women are not equal to any thing great, then ſurely they may be permitted to fill ſome inferior department in life, whereby, at leaſt, they may be prevented from becoming burdenſome, or pining away for want of real neceſſaries? And, however ſhocking to the ſympathiſing part of mankind may be the recital of theſe melancholy truths, yet the vaſt numbers of poor unhappy mothers and daughters, who are daily labouring under the weight of theſe cruel oppreſſions are innumerable. Nor is it poſſible for words to expreſs, or pen to paint, the grief of one of theſe unhappy mothers, who, with her helpleſs children, is reduced to ſuch extreme miſery and want: can any thing be more diſtreſsful or pitiable!

O, that men would be wiſe unto ſalvation, and not prefer ſordid gain to the more ſubſtantial happineſs of conforming to the precepts of the Supreme Judge, who cannot deceive nor be deceived! namely "Whoſoever ſhall

ſhall offend one of theſe little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millſtone were hanged about his neck, and he were caſt into the ſea." A ſentence one cannot think upon without horror, ſeeing ſo many little ones offended daily and hourly, and left helpleſs and forlorn in all the ſtorms and trials of the world, to work their paſſage through mortality, ſtill floating about, like a bubble upon the ſurface, in all the delicacy and ſoftneſs of their ſex, without money, friend, or proſpect of any human comfort, or even relief, to enable them to drag on a miſerable exiſtence the enſuing day; ſurely, there is not any thing can equal the horrors of a ſtate like this: yet what numbers experience it all, before they will condeſcend ſo low as to ſhrink from the paths of virtue. Surely this does not merit cenſure: yet, aſtoniſhing it is, the ſmalleſt feature of poverty is almoſt ſure to be branded with the names of infamy and vice. What a trying ſituation after a life of affluence! yet, where is the mind of ſenſibility, under ſuch circumſtances as theſe, who would not feel it almoſt as great an affliction to diſcover their poverty

poverty as to ſuſtain it; for, thus miſerably ſituated, to have any of their former acquaintance witneſs their wretchedneſs, muſt be a very trying circumſtance indeed, and eſpecially ſince, by woeful experience, they are taught to know that little more than cenſure will be derived from it.

Indeed, amidſt the great variety of complicated ills which are attendant upon all mankind, and from which not any are exempt, there will appear ſeveral in the world, the origin of whoſe woe is ſcarcely to be traced; and who, as a much admired author (Dr. Gregory) obſerves, will find none to compaſſionate, or even underſtand their ſufferings: witneſs amongſt the prodigious numbers of unhappy females in the married ſtate, whom the adverſity of fate has left alone to wander through all this labyrinth of difficulties, and, perhaps, ſurrounded by a numerous train of children, who alike muſt feel the ſupercilious ſneers of taunt and reprobation, for they know not what. Indeed, this ſubject would alone open a very wide and dreary field to range in, ſo various and complicated are the calamities brought

brought upon mortals by the unſeen hand of fate, to which all muſt ſubmit, ſince it is not in the power of human ſkill to prevent: but all muſt allow, it is in the power of any one to moderate theſe afflictions by our beſt aid, or ſympathy at leaſt, inſtead of heightening the ſorrows of this unfortunate and oppreſſed part of the community, and with that well-known philanthropiſt, *Goldſmith*, may we ſay, and firmly believe,

> " Every want that ſtimulates the breaſt,
> " Becomes a ſource of pleaſure when redreſs'd:

for what can add greater pleaſure to the ſenſations of humanity, than to ſympathiſe with the diſtreſſed? conſequently to them I need not addreſs this diſcourſe, but chiefly to thoſe whoſe feelings are leſs warmed by the miſery of their fellow creatures, for a mixture of both ſorts there is in the world, is beyond a doubt. Witneſs a paragraph I have this day, the 17th of Auguſt 1798, copied from a well-known daily paper, the Morning Herald, which runs exactly as follows:

" Mr.

" Mr. Editor,

" My friend and ſelf, a few days ago, having dined with an officer at his barracks, returned home between ten and eleven: in Panton-ſtreet we were accoſted by an unfortunate woman, who firſt ſolicited our charity in Engliſh; but overhearing us, in our progreſs ſpeak French, ſhe renewed her ſuit in that language, probably thinking we might be foreigners, and therefore did not underſtand the nature of her firſt application. You will own, it is by no means aſtoniſhing, that hearing an Engliſh mendicant, *eſpecially a female*, beg in different languages ſhould excite our admiration, particularly as ſhe ſpoke both fluently and elegantly, the evident reſult of a liberal education.

" Under this idea, we liſtened to her petition delivered in French, which, being now ſo common an acquiſition, made us deſirous of knowing whether her learning was confined to that tongue only; my friend, therefore, replied to her in Italian, and we were not a little ſurpriſed to find her not only miſtreſs of that language, but alſo well verſed in Latin.

" Shocked to diſcover ſuch extenſive learning in one who ſeemed to profit ſo little by its poſſeſſion, and conceiving her an object of the greateſt pity, probably abandoned by unfeeling, ſordid relations, we delayed not inſtantly affording her ſome temporary relief; but in the moment of ſo doing, I was ſo unfortunate as to be recognized by my parents, who were returning from a friend's houſe, where they had ſupped. In ſuch a place, at ſuch an hour, and with a female, what could be thought? We were immediately adjudged criminal; and, upon our joining them, were accordingly reproached, as if their ſuſpicions had been true. Such is the power of prejudice, that it was in vain we proteſted our innocence, in vain we informed them of the nature of our converſation with this woman; theſe availed us nothing: we were not only cenſured for the immorality of the affair itſelf, but alſo deſpiſed for the meanneſs and vulgarity of our taſte.

" Unfortunately, what tends to confirm them in this their premature opinion, is the circumſtance of my friend's ſtepping aſide immediately, on perceiving their approach. But how

how eaſy is that accounted for? in ſuch a ſituation, where all direct proof of the innocence of the individual is, by the peculiar nature of the circumſtance, excluded, what avails, except to yourſelf, the conſcious rectitude of the heart.

"*Mens ſibi conſcia recti?* It is impoſſible to impart to others the internal feelings, except by words; and when people are predetermined to diſbelieve every ſyllable you urge in your own juſtification, how are you to effect your own exculpation? This action, therefore, of my friend is by no means a confirmation of our guilt, as it was extremely natural, that he ſhould wiſh to avoid being ſeen in ſuch a ſituation, in which appearances were ſo much againſt him. His motives being now explained, I beg leave for once to differ from that proverb, that *Innocence hath nothing to fear.*

"I am, Sir, yours, &c.

"W. R."

A ſtriking proof indeed, in addition to the many, that *unprotected* innocence has *every*

*human* thing to fear. But whoſe conduct of the four, think ye, was the moſt commendable, or pleaſing in the ſight of God or man?

Suppoſing, or even admitting, this poor unfortunate woman to be one of the wretched tribe, of whom we have been ſpeaking. is it not evident, her education was not calculated either for beggary or vice? Nor can it be ſuppoſed, from the diſtreſs which always ſeems attendant upon this abject ſtate of beggary alone, that it can be by choice preferred to ſome laudable and reputable employment. No: it is not in nature.

Then, in the name of reaſon, juſtice, and truth, permit me to aſk, from whence originates, and what is it that countenances, the cauſe of all theſe evils? Are they incurable? Are not women, by nature, of a more gentle and delicate compoſition than men, and leſs able to bear the hardſhips which ſo frequently are forced upon them? Has it not, in all ages, been the taſk, or rather the avowed choice, of the male part of the creation, to protect and defend the weaker ſex? and is not the male part of the creation better able to bear

bear cold, hunger, fatigue, and hardſhips than women are? Poor helpleſs women! who no ſooner meet the heavy fate of indigence, than, from their appearance, they are bound to ſupport a load of infamous cenſure along with it.

Although, at the ſame time, permit me to infer, there is not the leaſt neceſſity for men to undergo the ſmalleſt part of theſe hardſhips, even had they relinquiſhed their claim to women's occupations, ſince there is ſuch a number of branches in trade, beſide arts and ſciences, which are only calculated for men. Surely, then, women ought to be permitted to occupy the remaining few, nor any longer ſuffered to be bound down by theſe oppreſſive chains; for, does not generous Pity demand a hearing in their behalf? Does not common decency forbid they ſhould be inſulted in the manner they are? Is it manly, is it noble, is it generous, or humane? Would not one think, from ſuch oppreſſions, that men had determined to exert themſelves for the miſery and torture of their fellow-creatures.

I allow this kind of reaſoning, to the intereſted parties, may ſound rather grating to the ear: but, be it remembered, I have not undertaken the taſk of panegyric, but plain truth, which needs no high-flown language to expreſs it: nor have I a wiſh to make an invidious remark upon the conduct or behaviour of any man, and much leſs to include a whole body of them. But what ſucceſs in trade, if ſuch they have, can make the ſmalleſt atonement, on a death-bed, or come nearly adequate to the loſs of a poor ſoul, whom they may have been the means of caſting into the utmoſt miſery and diſtreſs, and forcing to ſeek an aſylum in the jaws of perdition? Would but a mind, capable of the ſmalleſt feelings of humanity, reflect on the many ſacrifices made to this voluptuous avarice, and, in time, ſpare themſelves that pungent remorſe due to ſuch ſevere reflections.

But, ſays the reaſonable enquirer, with regard to ſuppreſſing this ancient cuſtom, which is pointed out as productive of ſo much evil, ſuppoſing an expedient is found out, will it not be attended with ſuch a number of inconveniencies,

veniencies, as thereby to render the remedy as bad as the diſeaſe. To which I beg leave to reply: I do not preſume to inſtruct the learned, but ſimply to communicate my ideas; for, a complicated buſineſs like this, which has taken ſo deep root, requires a greater knowledge in human affairs to diſcuſs than the writer is poſſeſſed of; and a general knowledge of the cauſes which facilitate or obſtruct the happineſs of the community is abſolutely requiſite, which diſcovers the many convincing reaſons why a buſineſs of ſo much conſequence ſhould be properly inveſtigated; and, upon theſe conſiderations, as all things, whether great or ſmall, muſt have a beginning, I have taken ſome pains to be informed as to the nature of the ſubject. But as it is not expected a female can have much knowledge in judicature, I go upon the grounds of common ſenſe and reaſon, and not actuated by any other motive than a wiſh to ſee happineſs prevail, I ſhall accordingly beg leave to proceed to the following conſiderations; for, as in the eſtimation and choice of things, it is always granted we are to prefer better to worſe, and

ſuch things as are grounded in reaſon, to others that hold no compariſon therewith: we will, therefore, ſuppoſe the very worſt ſuppoſition on which the argument can be founded, which is, What are this body of men to do, or how are they to be diſpoſed of, if deprived of their preſent employment? Which may be briefly anſwered:

That although there may be ſome men, like women, of a timorous diſpoſition, and thereby may experience ſome inconveniencies, yet it is not poſſible the whole body of them can ſuffer, by reaſon that, as I before obſerved, men can turn themſelves ſo many ways in the world, which, were a woman to attempt, ſhe would be pointed at as ridiculous and frantic: independent of which, after having ſtated the heavy grievances under which, not only the female part of the creation are oppreſſed, but the community in general, it may juſtly be replied, that no man, or body of men can, in reaſon, lay claim to a privilege that is abſolutely repugnant to all civil ſociety: after which, will not all other reaſons appear to have little weight? In other caſes, has it had any weight with

with the police of the country? How many repeated inſtances have we ſeen of men, and even bodies of men, who, by certain obligations, have been obliged to give up public or private property, when a general good could not be otherwiſe obtained?

Then, why is there any diſtinction to be made between relinquiſhing property and privilege, when the public good requires it, which in all exigencies muſt confeſſedly be juſt? for, if change of circumſtances were to have no weight with the legiſlature in directing human affairs, what would the intercourſe of mankind end in, but contention between private intereſt and public good? But ſo long as we are bleſſed with a happy conſtitution, and rulers poſſeſſing humanity united with wiſdom, what have we to fear?

Were the deſire of procuring liberty or happineſs for this, or any other ſet of people, at the hazard of injuring the community, or any part of it, the requeſt would not only be unreaſonable but unjuſt: but after ſumming up, under each reſpective head, all the evidences I have collected, with a very gentle hint at the enormous

enormous expence, as well as danger, and other inconveniencies attending a continuance of this precedent, and conſidering the many great advantages which would accrue, not only to the community, but to themſelves, by engaging in more manly employments, I ſhall leave the impartial reader to draw the concluſion, and reſt the baſis of my obſervations with thoſe in power, for there are few, if any, precedents of arbitrary commitments, except the one in queſtion, which have not come under the watchful eye of the legiſlature, whoſe vigilance and impartiality have, at all times, been a ſtrong barrier and ſhield againſt any infringements upon the rights and privileges of the Britiſh nation; and, I preſume, an inveſtigation into the grievances of theſe poor ſuffering females will quickly be a means of doing away the precedent of encouraging, or countenancing, effeminate tradeſmen, which, it is evident, are not only the origin of ſuch unheard of diſtreſſes to poor helpleſs females, and preventing parents, who may be deſirous of breaking through the faſhions of the times, from placing their daughters to trades, but

but is abſolutely leading to the diſſolution of all good government.

Nor is there the ſmalleſt danger, when once the buſineſs is commenced, that the deep penetration and humanity of the guardians of the common weal will ever be baffled in ſo laudable a purſuit. For, notwithſtanding the ſubtlety of the enemy of mankind may invent a number of falſe and artful reaſonings, yet what will all that avail, when the curtain is drawn aſide, for then the ſpirit of juſtice and retribution is to be no longer appeaſed by ſuch artifice; for neither law nor equity will admit of mending their fortunes by fraud or violence. And, although ſome of the offenſive body may endeavour, by little artful chicanery, to gloſs over their crimes, and endeavour to palliate them with idle excuſes, yet the only real plea theſe oppreſſive traders can make, being that of private intereſt, as I before obſerved, it has at all times been judiciouſly ordered to be given up for a public good.

What can poſſibly be deemed a more efficacious good, than to relieve the oppreſſed, and preſerve ſo many poor miſerable ſouls from

from perdition. Yet it is greatly to be feared theſe conſiderations to men, who are grown torpid by cuſtom, or blind by ignorance, will give but little room for reflection.

Have we not every reaſon to believe, to the diſgrace of ſuch part of the community as call themſelves Chriſtians, that there are ſome, though we will hope but a ſmall part, whoſe hearts are too much contracted and bound down by avarice, to admit of any humane ſenſations, which, in a quarter of the globe, where the refinements of the age are cried up by all nations, is unaccountably ſtrange; for, in a ſcrupulous ſearch for facts, which confirms the writer's opinion on this ſubject, certain it is, there is not a ſingle page in the New Teſtament which does not explicitly, or on the faireſt inference, condemn ſuch conduct, either by the example or precepts of Chriſt and his apoſtles.

Then, ſince theſe men have become apoſtates from Chriſtianity, why any longer ſuffer their arbitrary power to be a ſubterfuge for fraud and oppreſſion? Let the ſalutary laws of Great Britain provide means for ſuppreſſing a precedent,

a precedent, which, through time and unforeſeen events, has become productive of ſo much miſchief. Or let them appear and ſhew cauſe, why they are entitled to oppreſs theſe poor women, in order to enjoy indolence and eaſe. And let their claims to the flagrant violation of the rights of our fair countrywomen be developed.

Although, at the ſame time, permit me to inſer, I cannot flatter myſelf theſe modes of proceeding are expected entirely to eradicate the ſin againſt the ſeventh commandment. But, from the prodigious numbers, which are by compulſion driven to the paths of wickedneſs, will it not be a means of ſaving thouſands of miſerable creatures from ſin and ſorrow, and enable magiſtrates, and men in power, to exerciſe juſtice and authority over the wicked, without fear of puniſhing the innocent with the guilty? for, believe me, it is not the incorrigible ſinner I take upon me to commiſerate, but the encouraged, or rather the compelled, ſinner; and ſtill more thoſe who ſuffer in innocence, which is the hapleſs, wretched fate of thouſands. And although I cannot recal

to

to my memory the trifling obſervations I have made on this occaſion, I am conſcious they are my real ſentiments; and flatter myſelf, however bad the compoſition, the deſign will be adopted by the generous and humane; when there is not a doubt, but the heavy burden, which theſe children of miſery have ſo long ſupported, will quickly be thrown off, and the ſtumbling block to virtue and happineſs be rolled away.

Have we not had ſufficient proofs, that the happineſs and welfare of mortals have at all times been thought worthy the attention of a Briton. Witneſs the poor ſlaves; what exertions have not been uſed by the humane friends of liberty in their behalf? Yet leſs, much leſs, are their ſufferings to be lamented than the poor females I ſpeak of, who have been bred up and educated in the ſchool of Chriſtianity, and foſtered by the tender hand of Care.

The ſlave is little acquainted with the ſevere pangs a virtuous mind labours under, when driven to the extreme neceſſity of forfeiting their virtue for bread. The ſlave cannot feel pain at the loſs of reputation, a term of which

which they never heard, and much leſs know the meaning. What are the untutored, wild imaginations of a ſlave, when put in the balance with the diſtreſſing ſenſations of a Britiſh female, who has received a refined, if not a claſſical, education, and is capable of the fineſt feelings the human heart is ſuſceptible of. A ſlave, through want of education, has little more refinement than cattle in the field; nor can they know the want of what they never enjoyed, or were taught to expect; but a poor female, who has received the beſt inſtruction, and is endowed with a good underſtanding, what muſt not ſhe feel in mind, independent of her corporeal wants, after the adverſity of fate has ſet her up as a mark, for the ridicule, the cenſure, and contempt of the world? Her feelings cannot be deſcribed, nor her ſufferings ſufficiently lamented.

I recollect ſome obſervations, made ſome years ago, by a late honourable, humane, learned, and truly worthy member of the Houſe of Commons*, reſpecting the buſineſs

* Mr. Burke.

of

of the ſlave-trade, which doubly confirms my opinion of the great neceſſity there is for an inveſtigation into the grievances I have been ſpeaking of, ſince it leads to a clear demonſtration, that the moſt judicious and benevolent may ſtill remain in the dark, as to the ſufferings of our Chriſtian ſlaves at home.

"There is," ſaid the honourable gentleman, "no ſtate in human nature but had its compenſations. What was a ſlave? a happy ſlave was a degraded man; his happineſs conſiſted in having no thought of the paſt, or the future, and this deficiency of mind it was which leſſened the dignity of man, and conferred happineſs on the African."

A very ſtriking and juſt obſervation, with regard to the African, it muſt be granted; yet I cannot but differ in opinion, when it is ſaid, that all mankind are capable of a compenſation. For, admitting the ſame mode of reaſoning to ſtand good, if the oppreſſions of one part of the creation are moderated through their ignorance, how much muſt the other be heightened by their ſenſibility and the refinements of education. Nor can I ſee the ſmall-

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eſt trait of compenſation remaining for theſe miſerable females, ſince the very education they have received in youth, redounds to their misfortunes in maturity.

Then, if an inveſtigation into the buſineſs of the ſlave-trade has been founded on ſuch humane and generous principles, how much greater pleaſure muſt it give the feeling heart, to patronize the poor, unfortunate women of our own nation, who labour under the very worſt kind of ſlavery, and muſt continue to languiſh under the fetters of a painful bondage, till death, or the kindly hand of interference, has ſevered the chain?

But the juſtice of retribution taking place, ſhall we not ſee theſe poor, helpleſs, and forlorn women ſet on a level with their fellow-creatures, and not be under the ſhocking and cruel neceſſity of ſtarving in a land of plenty? And when the face of ſorrow is enlivened with the ſmile of happineſs and content, and the weary tradeſman can lie down in peace, without fear or danger of being annoyed, by the lawleſs plunderer; when all are united in the bands of mutual benefit and preſervation, and

the memory of former woes is loſt in the bleſſings of a future age; it is then we may reaſonably expect, that leſs than half the immenſe ſums which are now required, will be ſufficient to encourage honeſt induſtry.

But to detail the extent of human woes in ſo ſmall a compaſs is impoſſible, ſo various and ſo fluctuating are the events of human life, and its ills ſo numerous: ſo many ſudden deaths, loſſes in trade, and other caſualties daily happen within our knowledge, the bare recital of which is not only painful to the narrator, but revives the melancholy tale of woe in the ears of the ſuffering parties; therefore, as the fate of an unknown individual ſeems ſo much on a par with the reſt of mankind, permit the foregoing pages to ſuffice; and, inſtead of adding the diſtreſſing hiſtory of the unfortunate Mrs ——, the writer begs leave to introduce the ſtory of Fidelia, which being pictureſque, and well adapted to the deſign, by permiſſion, may ſerve as a kind of back-ground to the piece, without wounding again the heart of ſenſibility, by the recital of paſt misfortunes.

THE

# THE STORY
## OF
# *FIDELIA.*

SAYS FIDELIA*, I ſhall make no apology for the trouble I am about to give you, ſince I am ſure the motives that induce me to give it will have as much weight with you as they have with me; I ſhall, therefore, without farther preface, relate to you the events of a life, which, however inſignificant and unentertaining, affords a leſſon of the higheſt importance; a leſſon, the value of which I have experienced, and may therefore recommend.

I am the daughter of a gentleman of good family, who, as he was a younger brother, purchaſed, with the portion that was allotted him, a genteel poſt under government. My mother died when I was but twelve years

* The ſtory of Fidelia made its firſt appearance in the Adventurer, No. 77, 78, 79.

old, and my father, who was exceſſively fond of me, determined to be himſelf my preceptor, and to take care that my natural genius, which his partiality made him think above the common rank, ſhould not want the improvements of a liberal education.

He was a man of ſenſe, with a tolerable ſhare of learning. In his youth he had been a free liver, and, perhaps, for that reaſon took ſome pains to become a free thinker. But whatever faſhionable frailties he might formerly have allowed in himſelf, he was now in advanced life, and had, at leaſt, worldly wiſdom enough to know, that it was neceſſary his daughter ſhould be reſtrained from thoſe liberties, which he had looked upon as trifling errors in his own conduct. He therefore laboured with great application to inculcate in me the love of order, the beauty of moral rectitude, and the happineſs and ſelf-reward of virtue; but, at the ſame time, profeſſed it his deſign to free my mind from vulgar prejudices and ſuperſtition, for ſo he called revealed religion. As I was urged to chuſe virtue and reject vice, from motives which had no neceſ-

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ſary connection with immortality, I was not led to conſider a future ſtate either with hope or fear. My father, indeed, when I urged him upon that ſubject, always intimated that the doctrine of immortality, whether true or falſe, ought not at all to influence my conduct, or interrupt my peace; becauſe the virtue which ſecured happineſs in the preſent ſtate, would alſo ſecure it in a future ſtate: a future ſtate, therefore, I wholly diſregarded, and, to confeſs the truth, diſbelieved: for I thought I could plainly diſcover, that it was diſbelieved by my father, though he had not thought fit explicitly to declare his ſentiments. As I had no very turbulent paſſions, a ductile and good diſpoſition, and the higheſt reverence for his underſtanding, as well as the tendereſt affection for him, he found it an eaſy taſk to make me adopt every ſentiment and opinion which he propoſed to me, as his own, eſpecially as he took care to ſupport his principles by the authority and arguments of the beſt writers againſt Chriſtianity.

At the age of twenty, I was called upon to make uſe of all the philoſophy I had been

taught, by his death; which not only deprived me of a parent I moſt ardently loved, but with him of all the eaſe and affluence to which I had been accuſtomed. His income was only for life, and he had rather lived beyond than within it; conſequently, there was nothing left for me, but the pride and helpleſſneſs of genteel life, a taſte for every thing elegant, and a delicacy and ſenſibility that has doubled my ſufferings. In this diſtreſs, a brother of my mother's, who was grown rich in trade, received me into his houſe, and declared he would take the ſame care of me as if I had been his own. When the firſt tranſports of my grief were abated, I found myſelf in an eaſy ſituation, and from the natural cheerfulneſs of my temper, I was beginning once more to taſte of happineſs. My uncle, who was a man of narrow underſtanding and illiberal education, was a little diſguſted with me for employing ſo much of my time in reading; but ſtill more ſo, when happening to examine my books, he found, by the titles, that ſome of them were what he called blaſphemy, and tended, as he imagined, to make

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me an atheiſt. I endeavoured to explain my principles, which I thought beneath the dignity of virtue to diſguiſe or diſavow; but as I never could make him conceive any difference between a deiſt and an atheiſt, my arguments only ſerved to confirm him in the opinion, that I was a wicked wretch, who, in his own phraſe, believed neither God nor devil. As he was really a good man, and heartily zealous for the eſtabliſhed faith, though more from habit and prejudice than reaſon, my errors gave him great affliction. I perceived it with the utmoſt concern; I perceived too, that he looked upon me with a degree of abhorrence mixed with pity, and that I was wholly indebted to his good nature for that protection, which I had flattered myſelf I ſhould owe to his love. I comforted myſelf, however, with my own integrity, and even felt a conſcious pride, in ſuffering this perſecution from ignorance and folly, only becauſe I was ſuperior to vulgar errors and popular ſuperſtition. And that Chriſtianity deſerved theſe appellations, I was not more convinced by my father's arguments, than my uncle's

conduct, who, as his zeal was not according to knowledge, was by no means qualified to "adorn the doctrine which he profeſſed to believe."

I had lived a few months under the painful ſenſibility of receiving continual benefits from a perſon whoſe eſteem and affection I had loſt, when my uncle one day come into my chamber, and after preparing me for ſome unexpected good fortune, told me, he had juſt had a propoſal of marriage for me, from a man to whom I could not poſſibly have any objection. He then named a merchant with whom I had often been in company at his table. As the man was neither old nor ugly, had a large fortune, and a fair character, my uncle thought himſelf ſufficiently authoriſed to pronounce as he did, that I could not poſſibly have any objection to him. An objection, however, I had, which I told my uncle was to me inſuperable; it was, that the perſon whom he propoſed to me as the companion, the guide, and director of my whole life, to whom I was to vow, not only obedience, but love, had nothing in him that could ever engage

gage my affection: his underſtanding was low, his ſentiments mean and indelicate, and his manner unpolite and unpleaſing. "What ſtuff is all this?" interrupted my uncle, "ſentiments indelicate, unpolite, his underſtanding forſooth, not equal to your own! Ah! child, if you had leſs romance, conceit, and arrogance, and more true diſcretion and prudence, it would do you more good than all the fine books you have confounded your poor head with, and, what is worſe, perhaps, ruined your poor ſoul. I own it went a little againſt my conſcience to accept my honeſt friend's kind offer, and give him ſuch a pagan for a wife. But I know not, whether the believing huſband may not convert the unbelieving wife? As to your flighty objections, they are ſuch nonſenſe, that I wonder you can ſuppoſe me fool enough to be deceived by them. No, child, wiſe as you are, you cannot impoſe upon a man who has lived as many years in the world as I have. I ſee your motive; you have ſome infidel libertine rake in your eye, with whom you would go headlong to perdition. But I ſhall take care to have your

your ſoul to anſwer for, as well as your perſon. Either I ſhall diſpoſe of you to an honeſt man that may convert you, or you ſhall diſpoſe of yourſelf how you pleaſe for me; for I diſclaim all farther care or trouble about you. So I leave you to conſider, whether or no the kindneſs I have ſhewn you, entitles me to ſome little influence over you, and whether you chuſe to ſeek protection where you can find it, or accept of the happy lot Providence has cut out for you."

He left me at the cloſe of this fine harangue, and I ſeriouſly ſet myſelf to conſider, as he bade me, which of the two ſtates he had ſet before me, I ought to chuſe.—To ſubmit to a legal ſort of proſtitution, with the additional weight of perjury on my conſcience, or to expoſe myſelf to all the diſtreſs of friendleſs poverty and unprotected youth. After ſome hours of deliberation, I determined on the latter, and that more from principle than inclination; for, though my delicacy would have ſuffered extremely in accepting a huſband, at leaſt indifferent to me, yet as my heart was perfectly diſengaged, and my temper

per naturally eaſy, I thought I could have been leſs unhappy in following my uncle's advice than I might probably be by rejecting it. But then I muſt have ſubmitted to an action I could not think juſtifiable, in order to avoid mere external diſtreſſes. This would not have been philoſophical. I had always been taught, that virtue was of itſelf ſufficient to happineſs; and that thoſe things which are generally eſteemed evils, could have no power to diſturb the felicity of a mind governed by the eternal rule of right, and truly enamoured of the charms of moral beauty, I reſolved, therefore, to run all riſques, rather than depart from this glorious principle. I felt myſelf raiſed by the trial, and exulted in the opportunity of ſhewing my contempt of the ſmiles or frowns of fortune, and of proving the power of virtue to ſuſtain the ſoul under all accidental circumſtances of diſtreſs.

I communicated my reſolution to my uncle, aſſuring him at the ſame time of my everlaſting gratitude and reſpect, and that nothing ſhould have induced me to offend or diſobey him, but his requiring me to do what my reaſon

ſon and conſcience diſapproved; that ſuppoſing the advantages of riches to be really as great as he believed, yet ſtill thoſe of virtue were greater, and I could not reſolve to purchaſe the one by a violation of the other; that a falſe vow was certainly criminal; and that it would be doing an act of the higheſt injuſtice, to enter into ſo ſolemn an engagement without the power of fulfilling it; that my affections did not depend on my own will; and that no man ſhould poſſeſs my perſon, who could not obtain the firſt place in my heart.

I was ſurpriſed that my uncle's impatience had permitted me to go on thus far; but looking in his face, I perceived that paſſion had kept him ſilent. At length the gathering ſtorm burſt over my head in a torrent of reproaches; my reaſons were condemned as romantic abſurdities, which I could not myſelf believe. I was accuſed of deſigning to deceive, and to throw myſelf away on ſome worthleſs fellow, whoſe principles were as bad as my own. It was in vain for me to aſſert, that I had no ſuch deſign, nor any inclination to marry at all. My uncle could ſooner have believed the groſſeſt contra-

contradiction, than that a young woman could ſo ſtrenuouſly refuſe one man, without being prepoſſeſſed in favour of another. As I thought myſelf injured by his accuſations and tyranny, I gave over the attempt to mitigate his anger. He appealed to Heaven for the juſtice of his reſentment, and againſt my ingratitude and rebellion; and then giving me a note of fifty pounds, which he ſaid would keep me from immediate indigence, he bade me leave his houſe, and ſee his face no more. I bowed in ſign of obedience, and collecting all my dignity and reſolution, I aroſe, thanked him for his paſt benefits, and, with a low curtſey, left the room.

In leſs than an hour, I departed, with my little wardrobe, to the houſe of a perſon who had formerly been my father's ſervant, and who now kept a ſhop and let lodgings. From thence I went the next day to viſit my father's nephew, who was in poſſeſſion of the family eſtate, and had lately married a lady of great fortune. He was a young gentleman of good parts, his principles the ſame as my father's, though his practice had not been quite

agreeable

agreeable to the ſtrict rules of morality. However, ſetting aſide a few of thoſe vices which are looked upon as genteel accompliſhments in young fellows of fortune, I thought him a good ſort of man; and, as we had always lived in great kindneſs, I doubted not that I ſhould find him my friend, and meet with approbation and encouragement, at leaſt, if not aſſiſtance, from him. I told him my ſtory, and the reaſons that had determined me to the refuſal that had incurred my uncle's diſpleaſure; but how was I diſappointed, when, inſtead of the applauſe I expected for my heroic virtue and unmerited perſecutions, I perceived a ſmile of contempt on his face, when he interrupted me in the following manner:

"And what in the devil's name, my dear couſin, could make a woman of your ſenſe behave ſo like an ideot? What! forfeit all your hopes from your uncle, refuſe an excellent match, and reduce yourſelf to beggary, becauſe, truly, you were not in love? Surely one might have expected better from you even at fifteen. Who is it, pray, that marries the perſon of their choice? For my own part, who

have

have rather a better title to pleaſe myſelf, with a good fifteen hundred a year, than you who have not a ſhilling, I found it would not do; and that there was ſomething more to be ſought after in a wife, than a pretty face or a genius. Do you think I cared three farthings for the woman I married?—No, faith; but her thirty thouſand pounds were worth having; with that I can purchaſe a ſeraglio of beauties, and indulge my taſte in every kind of pleaſure. And, pray, what is it to me, whether my wife has beauty, or wit, or elegance, when her money will ſupply me with all that in others? You, couſin, had an opportunity of being as happy as I am. The men, believe me, would not like you a bit the worſe for being married; on the contrary, you would find, that for one who took notice of you as a ſingle woman, twenty would be your admirers and humble ſervants, when there was no danger of being taken in: thus you might have gratified all your paſſions, made an elegant figure in life, and have choſen out ſome gentle ſwain, as romantic and poetical as you pleaſed, for your cecisbeo.

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The good John Trot huſband would have been eaſily managed."

My indignation could be contained no longer, and I was leaving the room in diſdain, when he caught me by the hand. "Nay, prithee, my dear couſin, none of theſe violent airs: I thought you and I had known one another better. Let the poor ſouls who are taught by the prieſts and their nurſes to be afraid of hell-fire, and to think they ſhall go to the devil for following nature, and making life agreeable, be as outragcouſly virtuous as they pleaſe, you have too much ſenſe to be frightened at bugbears. You know that the term of our exiſtence is but ſhort, and it is highly reaſonable to make it as pleaſant as poſſible."

I was too angry to attempt confuting his arguments; but, burſting from his hold, told him, I would take care not to give him a ſecond opportunity of inſulting my diſtreſs, and affronting my underſtanding; and ſo left his houſe with a reſolution never to enter it again.

I went home mortified and diſappointed; my ſpirits ſunk into a dejection which took from me, for many days, all inclination to ſtir

ſtir out of my lodging, or to ſee a human face. At length I reſolved to try whether indigence and friendſhip were really incompatible, and whether I ſhould meet with the ſame treatment from a female friend, whoſe affection had been the principal pleaſure of my youth. Surely, thought I, the gentle Amanda, whoſe heart ſeems capable of every tender and generous ſentiment, will do juſtice to the innocence and integrity of her unfortunate friend; her tenderneſs will encourage my virtue, and animate my fortitude; her praiſes and endearments will compenſate all my hardſhips. Amanda was a ſingle woman, of a moderate independent fortune, which I heard ſhe was going to beſtow on a young officer, who had little or nothing beſides his commiſſion. I had no doubt of her approbation of my refuſing a mercenary match, ſince ſhe herſelf had choſen from motives ſo oppoſite to thoſe which are called prudent. She had been in the country ſome months, ſo that my miſfortunes had not reached her ear, till I myſelf related them to her.

She heard me with great attention, and anſwered with politeneſs enough, but with a coldneſs that chilled my very heart.

"You are ſenſible, my dear Fidelia," ſaid ſhe, "that I never pretended to ſet my underſtanding in competition with yours. I know my own inferiority, and though many of your notions and opinions appeared to me very ſtrange and particular, I never attempted to diſpute them with you. To be ſure, you know beſt: but it ſeems to me a very odd conduct, for one in your ſituation to give offence to ſo good an uncle; firſt, by maintaining doctrines which may be very true for ought I know, but which are very contrary to the received opinions we are brought up in, and therefore are apt to ſhock a common underſtanding; and ſecondly, to renounce his protection, and throw yourſelf into the wide world, rather than marry the man he choſe for you; to whom, after all, I do not find you had any real objection, nor any antipathy for his perſon."

"Antipathy, my dear," ſaid I, "are there not many degrees between loving and honouring

ing a man preferably to all others, and beholding him with abhorrence and averſion. The firſt is, in my opinion, the duty of a wife, a duty voluntarily taken upon herſelf, and engaged in under the moſt ſolemn contract. As to the difficulties that may attend my friendleſs, unprovided ſtate, ſince they are the conſequences of a virtuous action, they cannot really be evils, nor can they diſturb that happineſs which is the gift of virtue."—"I am heartily glad," anſwered ſhe, "that you have found out the art of making yourſelf happy by the force of imagination. I wiſh your enthuſiaſm may continue, and that you may ſtill be farther convinced, by your own experience, of the folly of mankind, in ſuppoſing poverty and diſgrace to be evils."

I was cut to the ſoul by the unkind manner which accompanied this ſarcaſm, and was going to remonſtrate againſt her unfriendly treatment, when her lover came in, with another gentleman, who, in ſpite of my full heart, engaged my attention, and, for a while, made me forget the ſtings of unkindneſs. The beauty and gracefulneſs of his perſon caught

my eye, and the politeneſs of his addreſs, and the elegance of his compliments, ſoon prejudiced me in favour of his underſtanding. He was introduced by the captain to Amanda as his moſt intimate friend, and ſeemed deſirous to give credit to his friend's judgment, by making himſelf as agreeable as poſſible. He ſucceeded ſo well, that Amanda was wholly engroſſed by the pleaſure of his converſation, and the care of entertaining her lover and her new gueſt. Her face brightened and her good humour returned. When I aroſe to leave her, ſhe preſſed me ſo earneſtly to ſtay dinner, that I could not, without diſcovering how much I reſented her behaviour, refuſe. This, however, I ſhould probably have done, as I was naturally diſpoſed to ſhew every ſentiment of my heart, had not a ſecret wiſh ariſen there to know a little more of this agreeable ſtranger. This inclined me to think it prudent to conceal my reſentment, and to accept the civilities of Amanda. The converſation grew more and more pleaſing; I took my ſhare in it; and had more than my ſhare of the charming ſtranger's notice and attention. As we all grew

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more and more unreſerved, Amanda dropped hints in the courſe of the converſation relating to my ſtory, my ſentiments, and unhappy ſituation. Sir George Freelove, for that was the young gentleman's name, liſtened greedily to all that was ſaid of me, and ſeemed to eye me with an earneſt curioſity, as well as admiration. We did not part till it was late; and Sir George inſiſted on attending me to my lodgings. I ſtrongly refuſed it, not without a ſenſation, which more properly belonged to the female than the philoſopher, and which I condemned in myſelf, as ariſing from diſhoneſt pride.

I could not, without pain, ſuffer the polite Sir George, upon ſo ſhort an acquaintance, to diſcover the meanneſs of my abode. To avoid this, I ſent for a chair, but was confuſed to find that Sir George and his ſervants prepared to attend it on foot, by way of guard. It was in vain to diſpute: he himſelf walked before, and his ſervants followed it. I was covered with bluſhes, when, after all this parade, he handed me in at the little ſhop door, and took leave with as profound reſpect, as if

he had guarded me into a palace. A thouſand different thoughts kept me from cloſing my eyes that night. The behaviour of Amanda wounded me to the ſoul: I found that I muſt look on her as no more than a common acquaintance, and that the world did not contain one perſon whom I could call my friend. My heart felt deſolate and forlorn. I knew not what courſe to take for my future ſubſiſtence. The pain which my pride had juſt given me, convinced me that I was far from having conquered the paſſions of humanity, and that I ſhould feel too ſenſibly all the mortifications which attend on poverty. I determined, however, to ſubdue this pride, and call to my aſſiſtance the example of ancient ſages and philoſophers, who deſpiſed riches and honours, and felt no inconveniencies from the malice of fortune. I had almoſt reaſoned myſelf into a contempt for the world, and fancied myſelf ſuperior to its ſmiles or frowns, when the idea of Sir George Freelove ruſhed upon my mind, and deſtroyed, at once, the whole force of my reaſoning. I found that, however I might diſregard the reſt of the world,

world, I could not be indifferent to his opinion; and the thought of being deſpiſed by him was inſupportable. I recollected that my condition was extremely different from that of an old philoſopher, whoſe rags, perhaps, were the means of gratifying his pride, by attracting the notice and reſpect of mankind: at leaſt, the philoſopher's ſchemes and wiſhes were very different from thoſe which, at that time, were taking poſſeſſion of my heart. The looks and behaviour of Sir George, left me no doubt, that I had made as deep an impreſſion in his favour as he had done in mine. I could not bear to loſe the ground I had gained, and to throw myſelf into a ſtate below his notice. I ſcorned the thought of impoſing on him with regard to my circumſtances, in caſe he ſhould really have had favourable intentions for me; yet to diſgrace myſelf for ever in his eye, by ſubmitting to ſervitude, or any low way of ſupporting myſelf, was what I could not bring myſelf to reſolve on.

In the midſt of theſe reflections, I was ſurpriſed, the next morning, by a viſit from Sir George. He made reſpectful apologies for

the liberty he took; told me he had learned from my friend, that the unkindneſs and tyranny of an uncle had caſt me into uneaſy circumſtances; and that he could not know that ſo much beauty and merit were ſo unworthily treated by fortune, without earneſtly wiſhing to be the inſtrument of doing me more juſtice. He entreated me to add dignity and value to his life, by making it conducive to the happineſs of mine; and was going on with the moſt fervent offers of ſervice, when I interrupted him, by ſaying that there was nothing in his power that I could with honour accept, by which my life could be made happier, but that reſpect which was due to me as a woman and a gentlewoman, and which ought to have prevented ſuch offers of ſervice from a ſtranger, as could only be juſtified by a long-experienced friendſhip; that I was not in a ſituation to receive viſits, and muſt decline his acquaintance, which, nevertheleſs, in a happier part of my life would have given me pleaſure.

He now had recourſe to all the arts of his ſex, imputing his too great freedom to the force of his paſſion, proteſting the moſt inviolable reſpect,

reſpect, and imploring on his knees, and even with tears, that I would not puniſh him ſo ſeverely, as to deny him the liberty of ſeeing me, and making himſelf more and more worthy of my eſteem. My weak heart was but too much touched by his artifices, and I had only juſt fortitude enough to perſevere in refuſing his viſits, and to inſiſt on his leaving me, which at laſt he did; but with ſuch a profuſion of tenderneſs, prayers, and proteſtations, that it was ſome time before I could recal my reaſon enough to reflect on the whole of his behaviour, and on my own ſituation, which compared, left me but little doubt of his diſhonourable views.

I determined never more to admit him to my preſence, and accordingly gave orders to be denied, if he came again. My reaſon applauded, but my heart reproached me, and heavily repined at the rigid determination of prudence. I knew that I acted rightly, and I expected that that conſciouſneſs would make me happy; but I found it otherwiſe, I was wretched beyond what I had ever felt, or formed any idea of. I diſcovered that my heart

heart was entangled in a paſſion which muſt for ever be combated, or indulged at the expence of virtue. I now conſidered riches as truly deſirable, ſince they would have placed me above diſgraceful attempts, and given me reaſonable hopes of becoming the wife of Sir George Freelove. I was diſcontented and unhappy, but ſurpriſed and diſappointed to find myſelf ſo, ſince hitherto I had no one criminal action to reproach myſelf with; on the contrary, my difficulties were all owing to my regard for virtue.

I reſolved, however, to try ſtill farther the power of virtue to confer happineſs, to go on in my obedience to her laws, and patiently wait the good effects of it. But I had ſtronger difficulties to go through than any I had yet experienced: Sir George was too much practiſed in the arts of ſeduction to be diſcouraged by a firſt repulſe, every day produced either ſome new attempt to ſee me, or a letter full of the moſt paſſionate proteſtations and entreaties for pardon and favour: it was in vain I gave orders that no more letters ſhould be taken in from him; he had ſo many different

different contrivances to convey them, and directed them in hands ſo unlike, that I was ſurpriſed into reading them, contrary to my intentions. Every time I ſtirred out, he was ſure to be in my way, and to employ the moſt artful tongue that ever enſnared the heart of woman, in blinding my reaſon and awakening my paſſions.

My virtue, however, did not yet give way, but my peace of mind was utterly deſtroyed. Whenever I was with him, I ſummoned all my fortitude, and conſtantly repeated my commands, that he ſhould avoid me: his diſobedience called for my reſentment, and, in ſpite of my melting heart, I armed my eyes with anger, and treated him with as much diſdain as I thought his unworthy deſigns deſerved. But the moment he left me, all my reſolution forſook me, I repined at my fate, I even murmured againſt the Sovereign Ruler of all things, for making me ſubject to paſſions I could not ſubdue, yet muſt not indulge. I compared my own ſituation with that of my libertine couſin, whoſe pernicious arguments I had heard with horror

and

and deteſtation; who gave the reins to every deſire; whoſe houſe was the ſeat of plenty, mirth, and delight; whoſe face was ever covered with ſmiles; and whoſe heart ſeemed free from ſorrow and care. Is not this man, ſaid I, happier than I am? and if ſo, where is the worth of virtue? Have I not ſacrificed to her my fortune and my friends? Do I not daily ſacrifice to her my darling inclination; yet, what is the compenſation ſhe offers me? What are my proſpects in this world but poverty, mortification, diſappointment, and grief? Every wiſh of my heart denied, every paſſion of humanity combated and hurt, though never conquered! Are theſe the bleſſings with which Heaven diſtinguiſhes it favourites? Can the King of Heaven want power or will to diſtinguiſh them? or does he leave his wretched creatures the ſport of chance, the prey of wickedneſs and malice? Surely no. Yet is not the condition of the virtuous often more miſerable than that of the vicious? I myſelf have experienced that it is. I am very unhappy, and ſee no likelihood of my being otherwiſe in this world—and all beyond the

the grave is eternal darkneſs. Yet why do I ſay that I have no proſpect of happineſs? does not the moſt engaging of men offer me all the joys that love and fortune can beſtow? Will not he protect me from every inſult of the proud world that ſcoffs at indigence? Will not his liberal hand pour forth the means of every pleaſure, even of that higheſt and trueſt of all pleaſure, the power of relieving the ſufferings of my fellow-creatures, of changing the tears of diſtreſs into tears of joy and gratitude, of communicating my own happineſs to all around me? Is not this a ſtate far preferable to that in which virtue has placed me? But what is virtue? Is not happineſs the laudable purſuit of reaſon? Is it not then laudable to purſue it by the moſt probable means? Have I not been accuſing Providence of unkindneſs, whilſt I myſelf only am in fault for rejecting its offered favours? Surely, I have miſtaken the path of virtue: it muſt be that which leads to happineſs. The path which I am in is full of thorns and briars, and terminates in impenetrable darkneſs; but I ſee another that is ſtrewed with flowers, and bright with

with the ſun ſhine of proſperity: this, ſurely, is the path of virtue and the road to happineſs. Hither then let me turn my weary ſteps, nor let vain and idle prejudices fright me from felicity. It is ſurely impoſſible that I ſhould offend God, by yielding to a temptation which he has given me no motive to reſiſt. He has allotted me a ſhort and precarious exiſtence, and has placed before me good and evil. What is good but pleaſure? What is evil but pain? Reaſon and nature direct me to chuſe the firſt, and avoid the laſt. I ſought for happineſs in what is called virtue, but I found it not: ſhall I not try the other experiment, ſince I think I can hardly be more unhappy by following inclination, than I am by denying it?

Thus had my frail thoughts wandered into a wilderneſs of error, and thus had I almoſt reaſoned myſelf out of every principle of morality, by purſuing, through all their conſequences, the doctrines which had been taught me as rules of life and preſcriptions for felicity, the talifmans of truth, by which I ſhould be ſecured in the ſtorms of adverſity, and liſten without danger to the ſyrens of temptation; when,

when, in the fatal hour of my preſumption, ſitting alone in my chamber, collecting arguments on the ſide of paſſion, almoſt diſtracted with doubts, and plunging deeper and deeper into falſehood, I ſaw Sir George Freelove at my feet, who had gained admittance, contrary to my orders, by corrupting my landlady. It is not neceſſary to deſcribe to you his arts, or the weak effects of that virtue which had been graciouſly implanted in my heart, but which I had taken impious means to undermine by falſe reaſoning, and which now tottered from the foundation: ſuffice it that I ſubmitted to the humiliation I have ſo well deſerved, and tell you, that, in the pride of human reaſon I dared to condemn, as the effect of weakneſs and prejudice, the ſtill voice of conſcience, which would yet have warned me from ruin; that my innocence, my honour was the ſacrifice to paſſion and ſophiſtry; that my boaſted philoſophy, and too much flattered underſtanding, preſerved me not from the loweſt depth of infamy, which the weakeſt of my ſex with humility and religion would have avoided.

I now

I now experienced a new kind of wretchedneſs: my vile ſeducer tried in vain to reconcile me to the ſhameful life to which he had reduced me, by loading me with finery, and laviſhing his fortune in procuring me pleaſures which I could not taſte, and pomp which ſeemed an inſult on my diſgrace. In vain did I recollect the arguments which had convinced me of the lawfulneſs of accepting offered pleaſures, and following the dictates of inclination. The light of my underſtanding was darkened, but the ſenſe of guilt was not loſt: my pride and my delicacy, if, criminal as I was, I may dare to call it ſo, ſuffered the moſt intolerable mortification and diſguſt every time I reflected on my infamous ſituation. Every eye ſeemed to upbraid me, even that of my triumphant ſeducer. O depth of miſery! to be conſcious of deſerving the contempt of him I loved, and for whoſe ſake I was become contemptible to myſelf.

This was the ſtate of my mind during a year which I paſſed in Sir George's houſe: his fondneſs was unabated for eight months of the time; and as I had no other object to ſhare

ſhare my attention, neither friend nor relation to call off any part of my tenderneſs, all the love of a heart naturally affectionate centered in him. The firſt dawnings of unkindneſs were but too viſible to my watchful eyes. I had now all the torments of jealouſy to endure, till a cruel certainty put an end to them; I learnt, at length, that my falſe lover was on the brink of marriage with a lady of great fortune. I immediately reſolved to leave him, but could not do it without firſt venting my full heart in complaints and reproaches. This provoked his rage, and drew on me inſolence, which, though I had deſerved, I had not learnt to bear. I returned with ſcorn, which no longer became me, all the wages of my ſin, and the trappings of my ſhame, and left his houſe in the bittereſt anguiſh of reſentment and deſpair.

I returned to my old lodgings; but unable to bear a ſcene which recalled every circumſtance of my undoing, aſhamed to look in the face of any creature who had ſeen me innocent, wretched in myſelf, and hoping from change of place ſome abatement of my miſery, I put

myſelf into a poſt-chaiſe at two in the morning, with orders to the driver to carry me as far from town as he could before the return of night, leaving it to him to chuſe the road.

My reaſon and my ſenſes ſeemed benumbed and ſtupified during my journey. I made no reflections on what I was about, nor formed any deſign for my future life. When night came, my conductor would have ſtopped at a large town, but I bid him go on to the next village: there I alighted at a paltry inn, and diſmiſſed my vehicle, without once conſidering what I was to do with myſelf, or why I choſe that place for my abode. To ſay truth, I can give no account of my thoughts at this period of time: they were all confuſed and diſtracted. A ſhort frenzy muſt have filled up thoſe hours, of which my memory retains ſuch imperfect traces. I remember only, that without having pulled off my clothes, I left the inn as ſoon as I ſaw the day, and wandered out of the village.

My unguided feet carried me to a range of willows by a river's ſide, where, after having walked ſome time, the freſhneſs of the air revived

vived my ſenſes, and awakened my reaſon. My reaſon, my memory, my anguiſh, and deſpair returned together. Every circumſtance of my paſt life was preſent to my mind; but moſt the idea of my faithleſs lover, and my criminal love tortured my imagination and rent my bleeding heart, which, in ſpite of all its guilt and all its wrongs, retained the tendereſt and moſt ardent affection for its undoer. This unguarded affection, which was the effect of a gentle and kind nature, heightened the anguiſh of reſentment, and compleated my miſery. In vain did I call off my thoughts from this gloomy retroſpect, and hope to find a gleam of comfort in my future proſpects. They were ſtill more dreadful: poverty, attended by infamy, and want groaning under the cruel hand of oppreſſion, and the taunts of inſolence were before my eyes. I, who had once been the darling and the pride of indulgent parents, who had once been beloved, reſpected, and admired, was now the outcaſt of human nature; deſpiſed and avoided by all who had ever loved me, by all whom I had moſt loved!

hateful to myſelf, belonging to no one, expoſed to wrongs and inſults from all.

I tried to find out the cauſe of this diſmal change, and how far I was myſelf the occaſion of it. My conduct, with regard to Sir George, though I ſpontaneouſly condemned, yet, upon recollection, I thought the arguments which produced it would juſtify. But as my principles could not preſerve me from vice, neither could they ſuſtain me in adverſity: conſcience was not to be perverted by the ſophiſtry which had beclouded my reaſon. And if any, by imputing my conduct to error, ſhould acquit me of guilt, let them remember, it is yet true, that in this uttermoſt diſtreſs, I was neither ſuſtained by the conſciouſneſs of innocence, the exultation of virtue, nor the hope of reward: whether I looked backward or forward, all was confuſion and anguiſh, diſtraction and deſpair. I accuſed the Supreme Being of cruelty and injuſtice, who, though he gave me not ſufficient encouragement to reſiſt deſire, yet puniſhes me with the conſequences of indulgence. If there is a God, cried I, he

he muſt be either tyrannical and cruel, or regardleſs of her creatures. I will no longer endure a being which is undeſervedly miſerable, either from chance or deſign, but fly to that annihilation in which all my proſpects terminate. Take back, ſaid I, lifting my eyes to Heaven, the hateful gift of exiſtence, and let my duſt no more be animated to ſuffering, and exalted to miſery.

So ſaying, I ran to the brink of the river, and was going to plunge in, when the cry of ſome perſon very near me made me turn my eyes to ſee whence it came. I was accoſted by an elderly gentleman, who, with looks of terror, pity, and benevolence, aſked what I was about to do? At firſt I was ſullen, and refuſed to anſwer him: but by degrees the compaſſion he ſhewed, and the tenderneſs with which he treated me, ſoftened my heart, and gave vent to my tears.

"O, Madam!" ſaid he, "theſe are gracious ſigns, and unlike thoſe which firſt drew my attention, and made me watch you unobſerved, fearing ſome fatal purpoſe in your mind. What muſt be the thoughts which could make

a face like yours appear the picture of horror? I was taking my morning walk, and have seen you a considerable time: sometimes stopping and wringing your hands, sometimes quickening your pace, and sometimes walking slow, with your eyes fixed on the ground, till you raised them to Heaven, with looks not of supplication and piety, but rather of accusation and defiance. For pity tell me, how it is that you have quarrelled with yourself, with life, nay even with Heaven? Recal your reason and your hope, and let this seasonable prevention of your fatal purpose be an earnest to you of good things to come, of God's mercy not yet alienated from you, and stooping from his throne to save your soul from perdition?"

The tears which flowed in rivers from my eyes while he talked, gave me so much relief, that I found myself able to speak, and desirous to express my gratitude for the good man's concern for me. It was so long since I had known the joys of confidence, that I felt surprising pleasure and comfort from unburdening my heart, and telling my kind deliverer every circumstance of my story, and every

every thought of my diſtracted mind. He ſhuddered to hear me upbraid the Divine Providence, and ſtopping me ſhort, told me he would lead me to one who ſhould preach patience to me whilſt ſhe gave me the example of it.

As we talked he lead me to his own houſe, and there introduced me to his wife, a middle-aged woman, pale and emaciated, but of a cheerful placid countenance, who received me with the greateſt tenderneſs and humanity. She ſaw I was diſtreſſed, and her compaſſion was before hand with my complaints. Her tears ſtood ready to accompany mine; her looks and her voice expreſſed the kindeſt concern; and her aſſiduous cares demonſtrated that true politeneſs and hoſpitality, which is not the effect of art but of inward benevolence. While ſhe obliged me to take ſome refreſhment, her huſband gave her a ſhort account of my ſtory, and of the ſtate in which he found me. "This poor lady," ſaid he, "from the fault of her education and principles, ſees every thing through a gloomy medium. She accuſes Providence, and hates her exiſtence

for thoſe evils which are the common lot of mankind in this ſhort ſtate of trial. You, my dear, who are one of the greateſt ſufferers I have known, are beſt qualified to cure her of her faulty impatience, and to convince her, by your own example, that this world is not the place in which virtue is to find its reward. She thinks no one ſo unhappy as herſelf; but if ſhe knew all that you have gone through, ſhe would ſurely be ſenſible, that if you are happier than ſhe, it is only becauſe your principles are better."

"Indeed, my dear madam!" ſaid ſhe, "that is the only advantage that I have over you; but that indeed outweighs every thing elſe. It is now but ten days ſince I followed to the grave my only ſon, the ſurvivor of eight children, who were all equally the objects of my fondeſt love: my heart is no leſs tender than your own, nor my affections leſs warm. For a whole year before the death of my laſt darling, I watched the fatal progreſs of his diſeaſe, and ſaw him ſuffer the moſt amazing pains. Nor was poverty, that dreaded evil, to which you could not ſubmit, wanting to my trials:

trials: though my husband is, by his profession, a gentleman, his income is so small, that I and my children have often wanted necessaries: and though I had always a weakly constitution, I have helped to support my family by the labour of my own hands. At this time I am consuming, by daily tortures, with a cancer, which must shortly be my death. My pains, perhaps, might be mitigated by proper assistance, though nothing could preserve my life; but I have not the means to obtain that assistance." O, hold! interrupted I, my soul is shocked at the enumeration of such intolerable sufferings: how is it that you support them? Why do I not see you, in despair like mine, renounce your existence, and put yourself out of the reach of torment? But, above all, tell me how it is possible for you to preserve, amidst such complicated misery, that appearance of cheerfulness and serene complacency which shines so remarkably in your countenance, and animates every look and motion.

"That cheerfulness and complacency," answered the good woman, "I feel in my heart. My

My mind is not only ſerene, but often experiences the higheſt emotions of joy and exultation, that the brighteſt hopes can give." And whence, ſaid I, do you derive this aſtoniſhing art of extracting joy from miſery, and of ſmiling amidſt all the terrors of pain, ſorrow, poverty, and death? She was ſilent for a moment, then ſtepping to her cloſet, reached a Bible, which ſhe put into my hands: "See there," ſaid ſhe, "the volume in which I have learnt this art. Here I am taught, that everlaſting glory is in ſtore for all who will accept it upon the terms which Infinite Perfection has preſcribed; here I am promiſed conſolation, aſſiſtance, and ſupport from the Lord of Life; and here I am aſſured, that my tranſient afflictions are only meant to fit me for eternal and unſpeakable happineſs. This happineſs is at hand. The ſhort remainder of my life ſeems but a point, beyond which opens the glorious proſpect of immortality: thus encouraged, how ſhould I be dejected? Thus ſupported, how ſhould I ſink? With ſuch proſpects, ſuch aſſured hopes, how can I be otherways than happy?"

While

While ſhe ſpoke, her eyes ſparkled, and her whole face ſeemed animated with joy. I was ſtruck with her manner, as well as her words. Every ſyllable ſhe uttered ſeemed to ſink into my ſoul, ſo that I never can forget it. I reſolved to examine a religion, which was capable of producing ſuch effects as I could not attribute either to chance or error. The good couple preſſed me, with ſo much unaffected kindneſs, to make their little parſonage my aſylum till I could better diſpoſe of myſelf, that I accepted their offer. Here, with the aſſiſtance of the clergyman, who is a plain, ſenſible, and truly pious man, I have ſtudied the Holy Scriptures, and the evidences of their authority. But after reading them with candour and attention, I found all the intrinſic arguments of their truth ſuperfluous: the excellency of their precepts, the conſiſtency of their doctrines, and the glorious motives and encouragements to virtue which they propoſe; together with the ſtriking example I had before my eyes of their ſalutary effects, left me no doubt of their divine authority.

During

During the time of my abode here, I have been witneſs to the more than heroic, the joyful, the triumphant death of the dear good woman. With as much ſoftneſs and tenderneſs as I ever ſaw in a female character, ſhe ſhewed more dauntleſs intrepidity than the ſterneſt philoſopher, or the proudeſt hero. No torment could ſhake the conſtancy of her ſoul, or length of pain wear out the ſtrength of her patience. Death was to her an object not of horror but of hope. When I heard her pour forth her laſt breath in thankſgiving, and ſaw the ſmile of extaſy remain on her pale face when life was fled, I could not help crying out in the beautiful language I had lately learnt from the Sacred Writings, "O Death! where is thy ſting? O Grave! where is thy victory?"

I am now preparing to leave my excellent benefactor, and get my bread in a ſervice, to which he has recommended me in a neighbouring family. A ſtate of ſervitude, to which once I could not reſolve to yield, appears no longer dreadful to me; that pride, which would have made it galling, Chriſtianity has

has ſubdued, though philoſophy attempted it in vain. As a penitent, I ſhould gratefully ſubmit to mortification; but as a Chriſtian, I find myſelf ſuperior to every mortification, except the ſenſe of guilt. This has humbled me to the duſt: but the aſſurances that are given me by the Saviour of the world of the divine pardon and favour, upon ſincere repentance, have calmed my troubled ſpirit, and filled my mind with peace and joy, which the world can neither give nor take away. Thus, without any change for the better in my outward circumſtances, I find myſelf changed from a diſtracted, poor, deſpairing wretch, to a contented, happy, grateful being; thankful for, and pleaſed with my preſent ſtate of exiſtence; yet exulting in the hope of quitting it for endleſs glory and happineſs.

O! Sir, tell the unthinking mortals, who will not take the pains of enquiring into thoſe truths which moſt concern them, and who are led by faſhion, and the pride of human reaſon, into a contempt for the ſacred oracles of God, tell them this truth, which experience hath taught me, that though vice is conſtantly attended

tended by misery, virtue itself cannot confer happiness in this world, except it is animated with the hopes of eternal bliss in the world to come.

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